

BALLINASLOELIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 10 Issue 1: Apr '20 - May '20

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REAMHRA

Welcome to Volume 10 issue one

In the words of Seamus Heaney "If we can winter this one out, we can summer anywhere!"

If I thought that penning an editorial was difficult late last January with all the deaths that seem to have stockpiled on us – this is off the Richter scale completely, for this the first of our online solely edition.

There is no Events Guide for this first time in 55 issues. Instead we have some messages from our Christian Faith Community about Easter and how its core messages of hope are never now more relevant.

When (that is not an If) this crisis passes we will begin to animate the Ballinasloe.ie Calendar of events online. Meantime we will be using our online presence for all community messaging and encourage others to do the same.

It has been a challenge to compile this as the situation was so fluid, now that we are all house quarantined and getting used to the new norms it's a bit easier. The effort was not to catalogue a community going to sleep but to showcase a community plodding through this adversity; like all the others, down through the ages.

Growing up in the 80s – Lent was a time for these 2 and 3 day spiritual retreats for us young second level students – away from the books.

My sense is that while we are on retreat from this virus; we

From Alaska to Argentina and Beijing to Ballinasloe it has suddenly become a very small World. Everything has come to a standstill and suddenly priorities change with Health and Wellbeing topping the list. While as a Race we are highly competitive, we also have a strong supportive and community spirit inbuilt to our genes and now more than ever this trait is called upon as we need to help and encourage one another in different ways as we get through this crisis. We will never return to the "ways things were before this". Working from home will become more common. Unnecessary travel will be curtailed. Gardens are going to look great this Summer.

As for the trolley crisis in our Hospitals & overcrowding – food for thought. The Homeless issue needed to be investigated in greater depth than ever before given the number of vacant properties all over the country. In regard to Ballinasloe LIFE, the collation and printing is totally dependent on Advertising revenue from our subscribers and given the current trading conditions we decided that we could not go looking for payment for this issue and hence here is what we have decided to do. We are pulling the magazine together with the submissions received as normal and are including existing advertisers advert free of charge.

have been gifted (whether we like it or not) a block of time to step off the treadmill (if you are not a household with a caregiver, frontline worker or essential industry worker) and go on RETREAT. Not just the Catholic concept of old but actually take stock, re-examine what is important to you, do some reading, reviewing, relearning, re-connecting with those mates or relatives you have lost contact with. Cherish the stillness.

Make no mistake the town and community that will re-emerge from all the Cocooning, grieving and anger will be very different than the one that was packed away since Paddy's Day. What ever we rebuild on the rubble of pre Corona, my hope is that will be less individualistic, less resource wasteful and more kind.

As this pandemic grows worse and brings its terror to a few degrees of separation for everyone, we may well find that the concept of "loving thy Neighbour as thyself" becomes more obvious than Biblical.

Keep Safe, Keep Strong and look out for each other.

Beir Bua

Le Gach De Ghui,
COLM CROFFY,
Editor.



for this issue. We are not going to print hard copies but Ballinasloe LIFE will be available online for all to read.

No events guide is included as it is impossible to plan ahead but as we get back to normal we will update details on Ballinasloe.ie

There is a cost of c. €3,500 to do this but this cost will be covered by Ballinasloe Area Community Development Limited following approval from the Board.

During and in the aftermath of this unprecedented period we will have a different outlook on the things we take for granted. For now we need to put our shoulder to the wheel and conform to all that we are asked to do which is based on Professional Advice.

Finally a special mention to all of those people who are working on the front line to keep services available, staff in Pharmacies, Food outlets, Essential Retail and all Health Care workers. They are at the cold face and need our full co-operation.

SEAMUS DUFFY,
Chairman Ballinasloe Area Community Development Limited.



Articles and Photos Welcome

NEXT ISSUE
Deadline 13th May

For submission of articles, please email:
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Creagh Community Development Council received word last week from Roscommon County Council that works under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2019 will begin in early May in the Creagh area.

The group were successful last year in its application through Roscommon County Council for the maximum grant of €100,000 available for infrastructural works at Suckfield and along the road between Dubarry Factory and Dolan's Centra Store. The two councils will provide the 20% matching funds required under the scheme.

The works on the Shannonbridge road at Suckfield will involve the laying of a footpath, where lights have already been installed. When completed the safety of the many walkers and joggers, who currently are obliged to use the road along this section, will be assured and a very attractive walking amenity will be available for healthy recreational activity in the Creagh area.

The section between Dolan's Centra Store and Dubarry Factory will involve the erection of lights and the installation of a footpath on

the southern side of the road to Athlone. This development will be particularly welcome news to the many walkers and shoppers who use this section all year round. It's hoped that a similar infrastructural upgrading between Dolan's and Beagh roundabout can be achieved in the not too distant future.

Creagh Council has also been in talks with Roscommon County Council regarding the upgrading the roundabout, emphasising its strategic location on important arteries to Ballinasloe Town.

The pursuit of a new roundabout at Creagh junction is still top of Creagh Council's agenda. Despite a number of meetings with Ballinasloe Municipal Council officials and councillors over recent years, little progress has been made so far.

The advice received by Creagh Council from professionals supports the view that a section of St. Brigid's adjoining ground would be essential to accommodate the type of roundabout required.

Furthermore, the community council is worried with the dangerous speeding on the outgoing-lane of the Creagh road, and to ameliorate the situation is prepared to fund a taming-light opposite the cemetery.



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Michael Fitzmaurice, the recently re-elected Independent TD for the Roscommon-Galway constituency, believes that there is huge potential for Ballinasloe-but it will require plenty of support for it to prosper moving forward.

The Agricultural Contractor having been re-elected to represent the constituency in February, he must now take on the task of implementing the promises he made before the upcoming election. Before his election, one of his promises was to alleviate the flooding problem which faced the town earlier in the year and which continues to worry many citizens.

Despite the recent upturn in the weather, he wants to fix the problem before it raises its ugly head again. From liaising with the Office of Public Works and Galway County Council, he is confident that a flood relief scheme for Ballinasloe will be forthcoming in the not too distant future.

Meanwhile, in order to prosper, it is imperative that efforts are made to encourage employers to set up in the area in order to bring more jobs back to the town.

Geographically, he believes the town is ideally located if a business wished to establish a hub in Ireland which would be easily accessible, with access to the motorway, to broadband and to other critical infrastructure make it a prime location.

"For as long as I am a public representative for this constituency, I will work alongside the relevant stakeholders, including IDA Ireland, to encourage prospective employers to establish hubs in the Ballinasloe region. While it must be acknowledged that the street enhancement works – which are continuing in some areas – that have been carried out in the town in recent months have had a significant impact on businesses, they should represent a greater benefit moving forward.

"Another service which will need to improve if the town is to prosper is public transport. An improved bus and train service, travelling in both the Galway and Dublin directions, is essential if potential commuters are to call Ballinasloe their home in the future.

"In terms of the unused buildings owned by the HSE in the town, I would like to see them being redeveloped and put back into use. The establishment of a hub for the Institute of Technology in Athlone (AIT), for example, would be an exciting avenue to explore" said Michael.

He is aware of the new 50-bed ward block set to be built in Portiuncula Hospital, and believes it will be important for pressure to be maintained on the Government and the HSE to ensure that commitment is followed through on and that the A&E department in the hospital needs to be enhanced and upgraded, given the volume of patients it is dealing with from across the region.

Given the Covid-19 outbreak, it is apparent that every business will be under ferocious pressure in the next few weeks and months. Government intervention may well be required in order to get some businesses back up and running.

"Rural towns were already struggling prior to this outbreak and now every public representative has a responsibility to do their utmost to ensure that supports are in place to alleviate the impact of this virus" he stressed.

If a constituent has a concern that they would like to raise, they can contact him by email on: Michael.fitzmaurice@oireachtas.ie. Contact numbers include 090 662 6824 and 090 662 8479. His constituency office is located in Roscommon Town and is available by appointment.

Michael Fitzmaurice TD 086-1914565.



Michael Fitzmaurice

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CLAIRE KERRANE-FIRST SINN FEIN TD IN 97 YEARS



Claire Kerrane with Cllr. Dermot Connolly

Claire Kerrane, took the third and final seat in the Roscommon-Galway Constituency and so became the first Sinn Féin TD to be voted into the Dail from this constituency in 97 years.

The Roscommon girl joined Sinn Féin during a dispute over plans to build an anaerobic digestion plant in her area, when she became involved in an action group against the project. Before becoming

a TD, she worked as a parliamentary assistant to Independent TD, Luke 'Ming' Flanagan and later as a political adviser on social protection for Sinn Féin in Leinster House. She is a graduate of English and Politics from NUI Galway and in 2016, qualified as a secondary school teacher.

"At the moment, I am busy trying to establish my office in Ballinasloe to ensure that the people of the town and surrounding areas have a point of contact me easily when and if they may need it. I am hopeful that the office will be up and running in the coming weeks. In the meantime, I have been busy meeting local organisations and constituents on a range of issues. I will also meet with the General Manager of Portiuncula Hospital. Healthcare, housing and job creation are my main priorities as a TD".

As part of Sinn Féin's work to put a Programme for Government together, she has been involved in some of the meetings with key stakeholders whose sectors will be a priority. This includes childcare

and farming organisations, trade unions, housing bodies and representatives from the health sector among others.

She is aware of the importance of job creation and investment for the town. That was the number one issue raised with her on the doorsteps. She firmly believes that semi-state bodies like the IDA have not done their job in creating employment in the locality and knows this has to stop if towns and villages are to be sustained into the future - if they will be viable places to live.

"Hand in hand with job creation is investment. Galway County Council requires far more Government funding than it is currently receiving. The figures from central Government funding have been falling for years." She feels locals know this the best as they have to travel on poor roads or when they are unable to get maintenance work carried out in their homes. Investment can also work to see vacant properties opened up, people housed and life brought back into communities.

The services, including Maternity and Accident & Emergency have to be maintained and consistently improved and advanced at Portiuncula. The new 50 bed unit has to be staffed adequately and this will mean hiring additional nurses and healthcare professionals. After asking the Health Minister and understanding that no new staff will be hired to staff the new 50 bed unit, rather existing staff will be transferred into it, but insists that she will keep fighting to improve staffing conditions in the hospital.

"The Coronavirus has really taken over. This will worry people and it will be hugely challenging for many businesses and employees. I want to encourage you to look after yourselves and each other in these weeks ahead. If you have elderly neighbours, check in on them. If you need advice as a worker or an employer, please do not hesitate to get in touch".

She has no office contact details as of yet but people can contact her online via her email claire.kerrane@oireachtas.ie, on social media, or by mobile on 087 194 5254.

BY LIAM COSGROVE

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Denis Naughten is an Independent politician who served as Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment from 2016 to 2018. He came second in the recent election following behind Michael Fitzmaurice. He has been a member of the Dail since 1997.

Naughten is from Drum, County Roscommon. He was educated at St. Aloysius College, Athlone, University College Dublin and University College Cork, where he studied a PhD in Food Microbiology. His father Liam Naughten was a Fine Gael TD and Senator.

"It is hard to believe it is just weeks since we, as candidates, were looking for your support to enable us to continue to represent the constituency of Roscommon-Galway. And I want to thank you for that support and courtesy shown to my canvassers" he remarked.

He had set out a number of key priorities for the next Dail term and is focused on developments at Portiuncula Hospital, making the town a key part of the development of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands tourism strategy, progressing the redevelopment of St. Brigid's Hospital to drive local job creation, securing funding to complete the flood relief works.

One of his main priorities has been the delivery of high-speed broadband to every home in the country, the importance of which he believes has never been more evident than now. They're now people working remotely who before this may never have thought it was possible and this shows how in future – through the delivery of high-speed broadband – Ireland could lead the way on remote working.

The National Broadband Ireland plan to start surveying homes in East Galway & South Roscommon for the delivery of high speed fibre broadband. The initial offering will be 150mbps but homes can access up to 1000 mbps with rural business being able to access 10,000mbps if needed from 2021 onwards.

"When I became Minister in 2016, only 5 out of 10 premises in Ireland had access to high-speed broadband and these were all in major towns and cities. Today, that is closer to 8 out of 10 premises, many of them in rural parts of Roscommon & Galway" he said.

Naughten knows many local businesses have been forced to close their doors temporarily while others have adapted their business model to enable them to continue to trade and to continue to provide a service to their community. Many restaurants & food businesses have adapted to offer take-away and delivery service while many others are trading online and more have adapted their premises with social distancing in mind.

He wants you, to where possible, consider shopping local and support local fruit and vegetable shop, butcher, baker, local shop etc. or buying online or over the phone from other local shops/businesses. Due to the recent outbreak, many small businesses will struggle in the weeks and months ahead and shopping local may make all the difference.

"While the Government is providing supports to businesses and those who have become employed as a result of the current crisis we can all play our part in supporting our local businesses to ensure they are in a position to re-open their doors and continue to trade when this passes. We need our local shops and they need us" he stressed.

A new range of supports has been put in place to assist those who find themselves unemployed, working reduced hours, ill or struggling financially as a result of Covid-19.

If he can be of any assistance to you at this difficult time, or indeed in the future, he can be contacted at 090 6627557 or by email dnaughten@oir.ie



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CREAGH NS STUDENT ST BRIDGIDS CROSS PROJECT FOR CHARITY

BY LIAM COSGROVE

For the fifth year in a row the pupils of Creagh National School were trained in the craft of the traditional St. Brigid's Cross making for the Patrons's feastday.

They then sold their crosses to friends and family in aid of Ballinasloe Social Services and raised a whopping €7,686.92 for their much needed community support activities.



Front Row: Carly Furey, Emily Flynn. Middle Row: Noel Lohan (Principal Creagh N.S.), Regina Power (St. Brigid's Crosses co-ordinator), Teresa Coughlan (Manager Ballinasloe Social Services), Gavin Shaughnessy, Asmaa Al Jomaa, Annette Lynagh (Ballinasloe Social Services), Padraig O'Ceithearnaigh (Ballinasloe Social Services), Antoinette Blade (St. Brigid's Crosses co-ordinator). Back Row: Senan Kelly, Maja Wilczewska, Kalum Manning, Igor Bykowski, Hadiyah Rajaullah, Jenna Morgan, Diya Upadhayay, Aisling Blaine



Pat and Margaret Brennan of Ballinasloe Active Retirement are taught by Keisha Manning and Anna Ward the craft of making a St. Brigid's cross.



Zofia and Jenna Morgan



Ty Finnerty, Aaron Aylward, Senan Kelly and Fionnán Hanrahan making crosses at the Bank of Ireland to keep up with demand.



Sales Team at work in Dolan's Filling Station -Sean Casey, Cian Casey, Shauna Kenn and Igor Bykowski

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NEW PHOTO & MAKE UP STUDIO FOR MAIN ST.

Simona Renate has just launched her Photography and make up studios in the upstairs premises of the old Masonic Lodge, Main St. (opposite Lancaster house).

Having being born and raised in Lithuania, Simona moved to Ireland around 15 years ago. She lives in the town with her husband Richard and her two teenage children, Christopher who is 17 and Sarlota 13.

Growing up in Lithuania, she was very interested in art. She would enjoy painting and would spend time perfecting this. She also had an interest in acting and was involved in many drama groups.

She had never planned to move here. Due to the worsening conditions in Lithuania, her mother, Biruta, moved to Ireland first in search of work and worked in the kitchen in Gullane's Hotel for many years. Her husband quickly followed and eventually Simona moved to the town with her first child Christopher.

After coming out of school in Lithuania, she completed a course to become a qualified chef, although, she never took up a job in the profession.

Her passion for photography came from her grandfather. He was a photographer and had a hobby for collecting and fixing old cameras. She started taking pictures around 8 years ago, at first she considered it as just a hobby. She would take photos of her kids and other people in the area. As more and more people would complement her on her work, she began to think she could make a profession out of it, later it grew into a passion.

At first, she became a photographer for weddings and large events. She took online photography classes where she learned how to edit and take the perfect photo. Soon after she opened her own studio. It is located on Main Street, above the Crumbs and Cream café. She excels in kids' photography, portraits, fashion photography and everyday life.

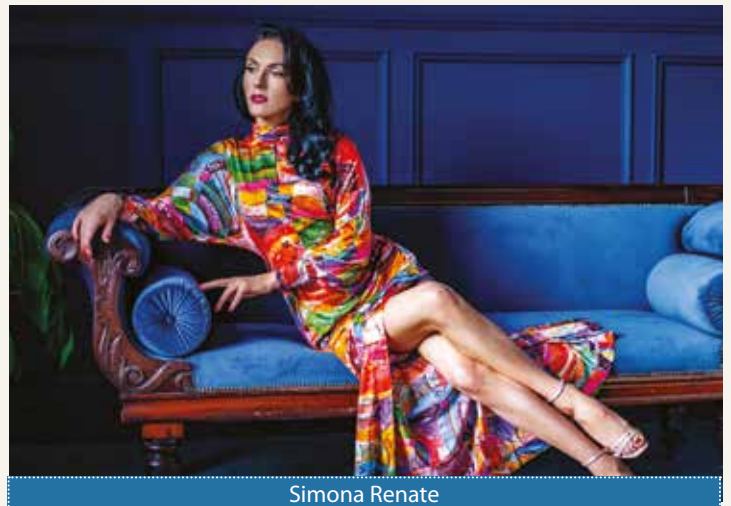
She had always dreamed of opening a photography studio in the town because of her fondness for it. She has met loads of friendly people while living here and also admires the community spirit.

Simona is also a qualified professional makeup artist. It was something she enjoyed doing her own make up and practiced on other people. She attended workshops and courses at the Dublin make up Academy which she enjoyed immensely while also collecting many diplomas.

She provides photography and make-up services in the studio. For a photoshoot she can create style, makeup and hairstyle as well.

You can only book by appointment. They're located on Main Street, above the old "Crumbs and Cream" premises and use the door is on the left side of the building.

At the moment due to the recent coronavirus outbreak, Simona has decided to close the premises for the unforeseen future. She will re-open when she believes it is safe to do so. However, anyone who wishes to book a photoshoot or a make-up session, contact them by phone: 087 9926275 or email: srphotostudio77@gmail.com for more information.



Simona Renate



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PULSE CLUB HOST INSIDER TIPS SEMINAR

BY LIAM COSGROVE

The local Pulse Club along with Local Enterprise Office Galway recently held a 'Business Insider Tips' event for entrepreneurs and business people in the town's hinterland.

There were many varied speakers on the night at the Shearwater Hotel - Pamela Finn aka PR Pam, John Mee who is the CEO of Sidero and Eoin Barry, Business Transformation Coach, ARV Excellence.

The club is an initiative of BACD to support new and existing entrepreneurs in the town. They provide a networking platform for both new entrepreneurs and developing businesses. Members are mentored in all aspects of their business and support service are available via monthly presentations by seasoned executives as well as subsidised in-depth courses on key topics as chosen by its members.

After an informal networking session with some light refreshments, the speakers were all introduced by MC Eoghan Kenny, in rotation, where they got equal time to present on their backgrounds, perspectives and challenges that they had to overcome in becoming successful as self-employed people.

John Mee, Co-Founder and Director of Sidero, has lots of experience of setting up his own company, having worked with telecoms

company Ericsson in countries around the world. He shared his experiences with the onlookers of problems and hindrances while setting up his business. Many of his businesses failed before they succeeded which was very reassuring tip to the entrepreneurs in the crowd and he kept urging to them not to give up.

Next up was Eoin Barry from ARV Excellence. Eoin specialises in helping business owners strengthen their companies, creating a good working atmosphere to get good results. He related the experiences he's had with many companies from across the globe, working with the Royal Mail, Roche and Medtronic, to name a few. He shared many techniques for improving the workplace atmosphere and getting the best from all employees.

Pam Finn also known as PR Pam, has worked in the media industry for up to two decades. She shared her tips for improving media skills and how to promote your business with minimal costs.

The night concluded with a question and answer session. There was lively reaction from the floor on a number of answers and on the advices received.

The Pulse Club are moving to online supports for their core focus group over the COVID time and do plan a late summer networking session get together

To get in contact with the Pulse club, see their webpage www.thepulseclub.com.



Back Row L – R: Seamus Duffy, Renate Kohlmann, Stephanie Colombani, Lyn Donnelly, Brian Leonard, Dorothy Scarry, Ana Victoria Mulcahy, Brian King, Honoria Mitchell Black Front Row L – R: Eoghan Kenny, Eoin Barry, John Mee, Pamela Finn, Marie Lyons



L – R: Brian King, Niamh Creaven-Connaghton, Honoria Mitchell Black, Lyn Donnelly, Stephanie Colombani, Eoghan Kenny



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FAMILY HOTEL SET TO REOPEN POST FIRE AND COVID

The outbreak of a fire in the early hours of the morning at Gullane's Hotel, Main Street, Ballinasloe, has resulted in the temporary closure of the premises. Due to the quick actions of staff and the fire brigade, the fire damage was mainly contained to the kitchen and bar area, with smoke damage to all other areas.



Pictured on the occasion of Tomás' Birthday Party celebrations were
Back Row L to R: Graeme, Eimear, Hannah, Ailbhe Gullane
Front Row Tomás and Caroline Gullane.

"That weekend was due to be exceptionally busy and we were devastated to have to cancel the many functions that were booked in. We are so thankful to all the families for their understanding of the cancellations. We are also very grateful to all our staff, and the local businesses, customers and friends who immediately reached out to help us that weekend" states Tomás Gullane.

Unfortunately, 45 members of staff have been temporarily laid off following the fire. Remaining staff are working hard behind the scenes to ensure all administrative work is carried out and to deal with all enquiries and relevant business during this challenging time of renovations.

Overcoming the devastation of the fire alone has been a huge challenge for Tomás, Caroline and family, but now with the emergence of the Covid-19 virus new obstacles have been presented to the refurbishment and the procurement of equipment.

"The health and safety of all the personnel working onsite is of the utmost importance. We are insuring all HSE guidelines on social distancing and hand washing are being adhered to by the team. Much of our equipment is manufactured abroad and we are liaising with the suppliers to secure timely delivery", explains Tomás.



All hands on deck - assisting with renovations Tomás and Graeme in the new kitchen

Over the years, Gullane's Hotel has gained a reputation for excellent food, combined with a warm welcome and personal service. Their friendly and efficient staff ensure that a stay with them exceeds all expectations.

The support that Gullane's has received from their family, staff, customers, friends and suppliers has been overwhelming. "Everyone has been so supportive in our time of need and it has made us realise just how truly valued the service we provide is. Gullane's was and is a home away from home for so many people. We are honoured to be a part of people's lives. We share with them all of the special moments in life from christenings and birthdays, celebrations, reunions and funeral hospitalities" notes Tomás.



Tomás, Caroline and Graeme Gullane

"We have been inundated with cards, well wishes and hundreds of online messages of support. This has really motivated us to get back to business as quickly as possible. The community have really been exceptional, and we cannot thank them enough. Our staff have been so supportive during this difficult time. We understand that it has not been easy for them to suddenly and unexpectedly find themselves out of work. Caroline and I are so grateful to them for all the support they have shown" he continued.

"We had expected to reopen around the May bank holiday weekend, however due to the Corona virus this will not now be possible. The Covid-19 outbreak is first and foremost a human tragedy, affecting hundreds of thousands of people. This is the biggest challenge that we are all facing. Our family's hope is that we get to return to normal as soon as possible and when we can, we will celebrate together all the special occasions that we have missed" concluded Tomás.

BY LIAM COSGROVE



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PLANNING UNDER WAY FOR XMAS LIGHTS 2020

Thanks to the near completion of the town street enhancement scheme, the old stock of festive lights can't be utilised on the new lamps and poles – but maybe utilised in other locations. As a consequence – a new Festive Lighting scheme – compatible with the new look streetscape needs to be planned.

Following a number of meetings with the local businesses and community groups, the plans for the Ballinasloe 2020 Xmas lights are well under way.

The town team under the umbrella of BACD are spearheading the project and an application is being made to Galway Rural Development (GRD) for the purchase of new lights for the 3 main streets & St Michael's Square, and if the budget allows festive lights will also be looked at other strategic locations on the approach roads to the town.

The current proposal is to make the top of St Michael's Square the focal point of the Xmas decorations with a new tree and feature to be installed, and the existing European tree to be utilised elsewhere.

The capital and installation cost will be in the region of €140,000 with approx. €35,000 having to be fundraised by the local community and the recurrent costs of supply, erection maintenance and electrical costs.

A steering group is meeting online over the coming weeks to finalise application and the project.



Artistic impression of new tree and features at St Michael's Square

BY LIAM COSGROVE

NEW ONLINE PLATFORM FOR LOCAL BUSINESS



Shopballinasloe.ie is a marketplace to shop online connecting customers with their favourite retailers, local crafters, salons and many more.

ShopBallinasloe is a new joint initiative between local businesses Araya Marketing and Kickstart web design based out of the BEC. The idea is simple, they are asking businesses and consumers in the area to support the local economy, to attract new business and to help ensure our towns survives.

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Research shows that for every €10 spent locally generates €40 of business to the local economy.

"We understand that shop doors might be currently closed and its uncertain times for everyone - but with ShopBallinasloe.ie we provide consumers the incentive and the means to shop local on their own doorstep 24/7" states Honoria Mitchell Black, Business Development Consultant.

Already the initiative has gained great traction amongst businesses and consumers, with over 20 shops signed up pre-launch, as well as huge customer interest.

If you are a local business and want to join up - get in touch via our social media, we'd love to offer our support and get your business online on ShopBallinasloe.ie.

BY LIAM COSGROVE

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ENAMELING CAROL PRAISES PULSE GROUP

Carol Kelly, daughter of Willie and Maureen Kelly, attended Scoile Mhuire secondary school, before enrolling in GMIT to study for an Honours Degree in Fine Art & Design. She then travelled to Bristol to study at the University of West of England where she completed her Masters and received a Distinction in Multidisciplinary Printmaking. She was also awarded with the Clifford Moss Memorial Award for her distinguished work.

While in University, she completed an internship at the Center of fine print and research in Enamel with Internationally recognised enamelist Elizabeth Turrell.

After living in Canada for four years, she then returned home to Ballinasloe to pursue her passion in enameled artwork. "Ballinasloe is a perfect location to start up, as it is the gateway to the west and includes the great community spirit and support from the likes of the local Pulse Group" states Carol.

She got a dream opportunity to present some of her Artwork to Dragons Den, Sean Gallagher, Eleanor McEvoy and the owner of Supermac's Pat McDonagh at the Vision for Growth event held by the Pulse Group held in the Shearwater Hotel before Christmas. These pieces were personalised for the event itself.

Her work consists of handcrafted enamel wall art/jewellery and large abstract paintings. Each piece being unique, and no two pieces are ever the same. All pieces can be personalised to suit the client's request.

Enameling is a rare and ancient craft dating back to the 13th century BC. It has gradually over the years faded out making enameling very rare. Enamel can be made up of either Powdered or Liquid glass that is fired onto copper from recycled cylinders using an enameling kiln at 800 degrees celsius.

In the making of each piece there is several complex processes that must be carried out. Great care must be taken when caring out each step of the processes because if one goes wrong the piece must be started again from the beginning. These processes take years of practice to master, not forgetting the vast knowledge of each type



Carol Kelly with members of the Dragons' Den after making her pitch at the Pulse club event.

of enamel. This is very important because certain enamels work or react to each other including the metals they are fired onto due to the chemical molecules they are made from.

Her designs are showcased in Irish design gift shops, such as 2 Wild Geese in Galway and Maysonbrook in Cong, Mayo. These are excellent venues for advertising and selling her artwork as they are in the center of very busy tourist location.

Carol has this advice for any new business who wishes to set up here. "Get out there and launch your ideals even if you don't feel ready. Manage time as efficiently as you can – outsource as much as possible so you can focus on your own work. Always try and build meaningful relationships with your customers and other people in the industry. Set realistic goals that can be achieved in increments over a long-term period. Work hard and don't give up easily".

She believes that the return of new shops and businesses re opening will give the town a face-lift and it will positively improve and enhance the overall appearance of the town. "Ballinasloe needs the support of local people to rebuild what was once a busy town. Competition will help to bring more people to town therefore" she states.

You can contact Carol on her Instagram and Facebook pages at Carol Kelly artworks. You can also ring at 0879041904.

BY LIAM COSGROVE



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TOWN TEAM MAPPING WAY TO 2030

Writes Anita Kileen, Town Team Facilitator

It's hard to believe since the last publication of the challenges our community has faced and indeed are still facing. On a local level we had the recurrent threat from flooding, nationally us voters turned our Political Landscape upside down, and globally we find ourselves battling the rampant Covid-19 virus.

We are discovering new ways of living and they all are not bad. Having the time to go for that walk, make that phone call, bake a cake, tidy out that press you have been avoiding for years! These are all good things. Time has been gifted to us and let's not waste it.

We find ourselves looking forward to "when all this is over" getting back to normal. The Town Team is in the habit of always looking forward, planning and working towards revitalisation of our great town. Since the last edition we ran our series of Pop-up listening clinics. The concept of these was to promote the TT, raise awareness of what we do and hopefully encourage new people to get involved.

We hosted them in the Credit Union, Library, Brewery Lane and the Shearwater Hotel.

Overall the response was fantastic. We had lots of people drop in, initially out of curiosity but following conversation some great ideas were shared and discussed.

It turned out to be a great opportunity to promote the TT to those in our community who had never heard of us and what we are trying to achieve. Not surprisingly we had the occasional indifferent shrug of the

shoulders and an odd person who thinks we will never improve the Town. However my high-gloss positivity could never be tarnished by the non-believers.

We are in the fortunate position now of having some wonderful new enthusiastic members of our TT and have gathered some workable ideas and plans from our community members.

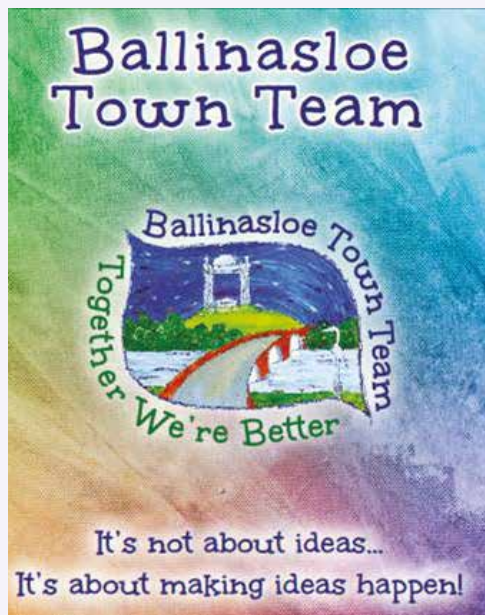
Recurrent suggestions were the scope of potential from our Waterways, the River Suck, the Marina. It is a fabulous underutilised resource. Could we develop tourism around it? Encourage boating/fishing enthusiasts to visit our town. Develop walkways that could meander along the path of the river.

Cycling & walking were popular topics. Greenways, cycling paths, walking routes, again so many local potential amenities. Another sustainable suggestion proposed the installation of e-bikes in the Town centre and the Train Station.

The Pop-up clinics certainly delivered - we have so many workable ideas to explore and new members to work with. I would like to thank all those who did pop in to see us and offer to become part of our Team. It's so encouraging to know there are many like-minded people out there who want to make our Town better.

So where to next? We are joining forces with The Pulse Club and the BACD to create a vision for how we see Ballinasloe in 2030. Collectively we hope to compile a realistic vision of what our town will look like socially and commercially.

We are busy working away quietly but as is often the case, projects like this chug along slowly. I would love to be steam rolling ahead but as Leo Tolstoy once said "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time."



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FERGAL DARCY SCOOPS BROADCASTER AWARD

Birchgrove Son, Creagh Ambassador, Garbally Past pupil and passionate Padraig Pearse's supporter – Today FM's Afternoon show anchorman - Fergal Darcy recently won a top industry award.

"I was very surprised! When I saw the list originally of potential winners I was both humbled and proud to be on it. The Hot Press Accolade is more important than other awards as it's not political or down to a judge. It's done once a year and it's done by the people... to walk away and be told in 2020 THE PEOPLE have voted you their favorite Radio Broadcaster... there are no words. I'm humbled, grateful but it will not change my attention to detail or diligence when it comes to the job" exclaimed Fergal.

After College, Fergal did a brief stint in Clare FM before being head hunted to work in iRADIO on its launch. He completed a very successful 8 years there before leaving 5 years ago for TODAY FM.

In Creagh N.S. he enjoyed the community games, the swimming club and acting 'The Oat Gallery' and 'Creagh Capers' with Declan Finn, Barry Power and the Roche girls, Catherine and Judy. He was always huge into sports having captained multiple cup and league winning teams in Ballinasloe RFC U-14, U-16 and U-18s.

Garbally College still holds huge affection for Fergal. "Stephen Reilly who is now principal there, is perhaps the finest role model anyone could ever have. He was a phenomenal teacher, teammate and friend. Whilst at Garbally the stage and the pitch were my hunting grounds... from debating issues of world importance, to handing Sligo grammar their backside in a match... it was home", he muses.

"My fondest memory was the year before my dad died lifting the Kilroy cup as Captain of the Ballinasloe Rugby Team U-14. I scored the first try that day and we had one of the finest teams I've ever played with. We're all still close friends today 25 years later. (that picture is hanging up in the rugby club and if Petey Walshe (RIP) got a hold of me that time he would have been cutting for days!)" states Fergal.

He always loved music and production. He and Dara O'Flaherty would spend ages in The Pines listening to music and trying to pick out songs for his gigs. His sister Chareeda was a big music fan so she's partially responsible for his musical education but as time



Niall Stokes, Fergal D'Arcy and Hannah Tyrell at Now We're Talking: A Town Hall Gathering, an event hosted by Lyons Tea in partnership with Hot Press and Pieta House, the suicide prevention and self-harm crisis charity, at Smock Alley Theatre.

went on he just became better. A lot of the DJs at that time owe their start to the likes of John Mulvihill, John Finnerty and Titch Riddell. They always shared their talents, tricks and advice with every up and coming young DJ.

"My first ever gig was in The Emerald Ballroom and it was wedged. At that time Frank Gallagher, Noelle Reynolds and Helen Butler had a huge impact on the youth of the town with The No Name Club" remembers Fergal.

In 2008, he and his team won the gold P.P.I. Award for Best Programme. It proved a turning point to move forward and achieve as much as he could by bringing radio to life.

"I ate, digested and slept, dreaming of new ideas. Radio has taken me all over the world i.e. making documentaries about AIDS in Africa, Bringing Ex-Pat's stories home from Dubai, etc. I think a large part of my job now is my researching and ability to conduct an interview. Last year I did over 50 interview, two of which were Billie Eilish and Lizzo, who won 8 Grammy Awards between them. You have to stay informed and active, as the day you're not and you drop the ball... it could be the last interview you do."

His advice for those thinking of a broadcasting career – "If you can dream it, you can do it."

BY LIAM COSGROVE

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PORTIUNCULA NUN'S 53 YEARS NURSING IN AFRICA



Over sixty years ago a young Limerick City girl arrived in Ballinasloe to commence her nurse training at the Madonna College of Nursing in Portiuncula Hospital. Little then did Patricia Madigan know that she would later become a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood sister and spend over fifty years nursing in Africa.

"When I was in school in Sexton Street in Limerick, Sr. Stanislaus from the FMDM in Ballinasloe showed a film of the work her nuns were doing around the world. I wanted to be a nurse so in November 1958 I joined the training school in Ballinasloe. I never intended being a nun but inside a year I changed my mind and joined the order as a postulant in the mother house, in Ladywell in Surrey. I continued my postulancy and novitiate there and was professed in 1962, in Ladywell taking the name of Sister Guadalupe.

"I returned to Portiuncula in 1962 and continued my nurse training, graduating in 1964. Two years later I was missioned to Southern Rhodesia, which is now Zimbabwe, having gained independence in 1980. I also worked in Northern Rhodesia, which is now Zambia since getting independence in 1964, mostly as a theatre nurse before retiring last year. Both countries have wonderful tourist attractions and we were very fortunate to have holidays in such places as Victoria Falls and visit Hwange Game Park, the Matopos near Bulawayo and Kariba Dam. I was in Africa altogether for 53 years but I got the occasional trip back home and visit my family and friends. Each of the hospitals I worked in were run by the FMDM's and over the years I met many sisters that I had known in Portiuncula and Ladywell which was very comforting."

The eldest of a family of nine, Patricia Madigan recalls arriving in Ballinasloe which she says was then a small town in 1958. "My parents had to pay an entry fee so I could enrol in the Nursing College and we got no wages for the first four months until we went on the wards. I was lucky that my father gave me a bicycle, so on my days off I toured around and learned about the area. And when I could afford it, I enjoyed the dances in the town as well as the Crystal Ballroom in Kiltormer" she added.

Now retired, the Limerick lady's sister, Emer, is a retired teacher of the Presentation Order in Limerick while she has three cousins and a niece nursing in hospitals. Patricia says the present health system is very serious and wonders why the thousands of beds closed some years ago were never reopened. "People are living longer, many nursing homes are closing down, numbers waiting for admission are increasing daily, we need action urgently" concluded Patricia. She looks back on her nursing career as a labour of love, years of fulfilment inspired by the Almighty and glad to be of help to those in need in far-off fields.

BY KEN KELLY

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WESTERN REGION PRESIDENT'S PRIZE

BY LIAM COSGROVE

The Bridge Club's Stack Trophy Competition Prize presentation was made recently with Marie Connolly and Mary Howley, Ballinasloe securing the title. The Stack trophy commemorates Pat Stack who used to work in the St. Brigid's Hospital and was a former bridge club member.



Marie Connolly and Mary Howley on Winning the Stack Trophy at the Western Region Presidents Prize in Portumna

They were awarded the President's prize of the Western Region, which is in its third year and it's the first time that a town native has won this prize.

It was held in Portumna Community Hall and there was food provided for everyone who attended on the day. The competition had previously been held in Galway and Caltra.

The annual Bridge Club Pairs competition was held over the last month. Denis Lynch and Ann Dwyer won the competition which was held over two different nights. The competition is played off scratch with no handicap which ensures everyone gets a fair opportunity to win.



Ballinasloe Bridge Club President Patricia Dunne presenting Pairs Championship trophy to the winners Denis Lynch & Ann Dwyer

Bridge is a partnership game requiring four players. Each player sits opposite his partner at a card table (in this age of computers the concept could be a simulated). Bridge is played with a standard deck of 52 playing

cards. The two highest cards are partners against the two lowest and the highest card deals.

The competition was held in their own Bridge club building. Games of bridge are arranged for Monday, Tuesday and Thursday nights. Due to the recent coronavirus outbreak, all events and activities have been cancelled until further notice.

All newcomers are welcome no matter what level they play off. Contact William Dolan PRO for more information at 0862623768.

Downey's Bar & Restaurant

Downey's are Currently Closed but we look forward to welcoming you all back soon.

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The Storehouse, located at Marina Point, is now home to Ballinasloe Christian Fellowship and over the past year has opened its doors to community events such as Weightwatcher classes, Essential Oil courses, Private therapy sessions, a Cruinniú na nÓg fashion show run by Youth Work Ireland and a wonderful nativity performance from Our Brothers of Charity.

Ballinasloe Christian Fellowship is a non-denominational church which has been meeting since 2006. In 2017 the leadership team felt God leading them to purchase the former Guinness Storehouse with a promise that He would provide the necessary funds. The stories of God's provision astounded even those with the deepest faith; seeing individuals sacrificially contribute the small amounts that they could, or members of the local community giving because of the work that they had seen BCF do in the past, were by far their biggest encouragements.

The vision of BCF is to 'know Jesus and to make Jesus known'; since many of the group have a personal story to tell of how Jesus Christ has transformed their lives and how He continues to show that He is alive and desires us to know Him and His immeasurable power for those who believe. The church meets every Sunday morning at 11am with various midweek meetings, events and fellowship meals. However, it is because they firmly believe in God's immense love for the people of our town that they choose to serve and love our community in practical ways too. Sometimes this has looked like getting their hands dirty alongside the Tidy Towns Association, painting at the Cancer Support Centre or the Brothers of Charity Respite Centre or helping in the homes of the ill or elderly. Other times this has looked like being a listening ear to folk at their annual Coffee Dock during the October Fair or running their annual summer Kids Bible Club which is always a highly energetic and creative time!



Catherine Ó Brolcháin telling a Bible Story

Since opening the Storehouse in 2019, they have been able to deepen their community involvement in a desire to bring real, tangible hope into the lives of individuals and to see God restore entire families and neighbourhoods. One of the ways that they are doing this is through the establishment of a Friday night Youth Drop-in for those aged 10-16 years. The Storehouse opens its doors for youth to drop in between 8-9:30pm for games, food and for a place that youth can find belonging and people who care about them.

Another way that they have seen this happen is through their partnership with FoodCloud and our local Tesco, in a bid to redistribute food that can no longer be sold but can bless those



David Bailie collecting FoodCloud

in need rather than end up in landfill. From March 2019-February 2020, BCF were able to distribute 8326kg of food which would be the equivalent of 19,825 meals to folk in our community. But for the members of BCF involved in this ministry, it extends past ensuring that adults and children (who may be struggling for various reasons) have access to food. It also means helping a young Mum with a school run to let her be at a Doctor's appointment, simply fitting a curtain pole for a single mother who doesn't own a drill or sitting with someone on a Saturday night and listening to their story so that they know that they aren't alone in this world.

All of us struggle with various things at various times in our life, and it is the fervent desire of Ballinasloe Christian Fellowship that every person of our town will know that help, support and hope are very close at hand.

For more information about Ballinasloe Christian Fellowship, including all up-to-date activities and events, please see their website www.ballinasloechristianfellowship.com or contact Pastor Tim Quinlan on 0872795982.

94-YEAR-OLD BRIDIE STRONGE PASSES AWAY

The passing of Bridie Stronge, "Loyola," Caltralea, Ahascragh, Ballinasloe at the Nightingale Nursing Home evoked widespread regret over many parts of East Galway, where she was highly respected. For over half a century her home was a hive of activity as daily callers enjoyed her open hospitality, friendliness and mirth.



Born in 1926 in nearby Kilconnell, Bridie Dwyer met a dashing Portumna man, Lex Stronge on a D.S. course and they were married in 1944. Two years later they built "Loyola" a family home, which is only sixty yards from where she was laid to rest, in the grounds of St. Teresa's Church, Killure.

Blessed with a family of five children, their home was a focal point for neighbours and friends, with Bridie's entertaining chats over a cuppa and her famous brown bread became a daily routine for her surrounding neighbours. Her love of cards, coupled with the occasional banter and all the local gossip attracted a never-ending list of callers, often resulting in some very late nights.

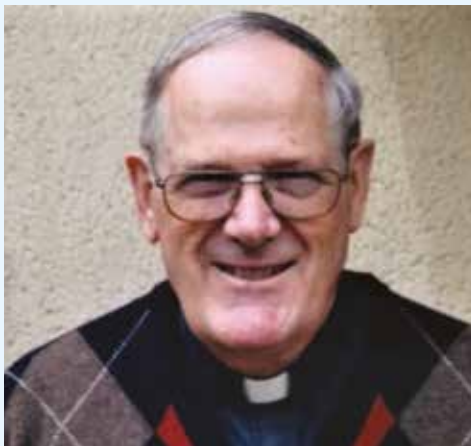
Twenty-one years ago Bridie lost her beloved husband Lex but she continued to occupy herself with life's chores, entertain the local neighbours and travel around to visit her family and their offsprings. She believed Killure was "the greatest place on earth to live" and this was evident as the members of the community rallied around her following her bereavement, something for which she was eternally grateful. In 2014 she retired to the nearby Nightingale Nursing Home where she spent her final six years. One of her last wishes was that special friends be mentioned, but not named, at her funeral mass, adding that they would know who they were.

A highly popular and entertaining lady with all sections of the community, Bridie's wit, charm and personality will be missed by many but none more so than by her family, sons Berrie (Dublin), Aileen (Dublin), Lex (Athlone), Gerry and Orla (Ballinasloe), 12 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren, daughters-in-law, son-in-law, her brother Brendan Dwyer (Kilconnell) and her 91-year-old sister Ita, in Australia, as well as her sister-in-law Marie, nephews, nieces and many other relatives and friends.

BY KEN KELLY

MISSIONARY PRIEST FR. JOSEPH FLANAGAN

Ballinasloe-born Fr. Joseph Flanagan, who passed away in the Columban Fathers Nursing Home in Dalgan, Co. Meath was the son of the late William J. and Mary (nee Murray) Flanagan. His father was a native of Ballyhaunis and established a veterinary practise in the town into which his sons, Billy and Declan followed.



One of a family of seven, he was born in Dunlo Street in 1936 and attended both the Convent and St. Grellan's National Schools before receiving his secondary education in St Joseph's, Garbally College. Fr. Joe joined the Columbans in Dalgan in 1955, was ordained there in 1961 and assigned to Korea in 1962, where he was appointed to Kwangju Diocese. He got to know places like Cheju, Mokpo and Noan before returning to Seoul for further studies and an appointment to Donamdong parish in 1965.

Fr. Joe served in Hallim and Wangsibri, Seoul and then worked for a year on Mission Promotion in Britain in 1974. He returned to Mokpo but later accepted the task of developing a new parish, Machondong, on the outskirts of Seoul.

Those first twenty years that Joe lived in Korea, from the early 1960s and into the 1980s, were the best and worst of times. It was a period of unprecedented economic growth and of political oppression that deepened as prosperity spread. The church found its voice on the side of the poor and the Columbans followed them from the rural areas to gather them into new communities on the outskirts of the

cities. There was no doubt about the worth of a Christian presence amid all that turmoil.

After a home vacation in 1983, Joe became the Regional Bursar in Seoul for three years before taking on the parish of Changhowon in Suwon diocese. While there, the Ballinasloe priest had the honour of carrying the Olympic torch through the town on its way to the '88 Games in Seoul.

The region of Britain came looking for him again and made him Bursar there in 1990, a job he served in until 2012. Even when he returned to Ireland at that stage, he continued to act as assistant Bursar in Dalgan until failing health forced him into retirement.

Although he was confined to a wheelchair, he did insist on remaining an active member of the community and enjoyed the late sessions where he claimed the 'real story' of Columban mission could be heard.

Joe was a gentle and unassuming missionary whose manner people found attractive and made him their friend for life. He coped quietly with his deteriorating health and died in the Columban Nursing Home, Dalgan Park, Navan.

Fr. Joe is survived by his sister, Helen Keane, brothers Declan and Tom, sisters-in-law Evelyn, Sally and Pam, nephews, nieces, extended family and the Columban community.

BY KEN KELLY

LARGER THAN LIFE PAT MCGOVERN

BY COLM CROFFY

The Town and Community were united in grief upon hearing the devastating news that the larger than life Leitrim man, Pat McGovern, was silently and without warning taken from us on the 21st of January last.

Tributes heartfelt from all the organisations he helped to mould, forge and support with his technical gifted brilliance and then from the countless folk who can remember their first seasons trotting the boards in a Panto, Relays Play, School Production, Mummers Festival, Musical Society Production and Pat's warm encouraging presence, flooded in.

He was the spine that so much of our cultural activity was hung around.

Arriving to town as a skilled tool maker to the AT Cross Plant, his vivacious and engaging nature soon found its way into Tops of the Towns, Variety Shows, Musicals and Pantos in the 70s and 80s.

He was alongside the wonderful late Des Devine, part of a comic duo that could wrench gales of laughter from a crowd with an eyebrow inflection, at the right moment.

As he gracefully gave way to the next generation of performers his theatrical and live performance muse saw form in him joining and then leading the Back Stage Departments of most of the live shows in Town and surrounds alongside the late Brendan Tully and indeed Master Stage Director Keelan McKeon.

Pat brought his own style, vision and skills set to making things move effortlessly with water, wind, rain and indeed fire on the Town Hall Theatre Stage for over four decades.

Combining his professional engineering skills, with electrical nous, plumbing, sound and carpentry skills; many a drab tale was suddenly and magically inflated with the galloping horses of Ascot, the Car and live Rain of the Hot Mikado, the Wind moving Dorothy's house in Oz, The sumptuous decor dancing in Beauty and the Beast and door bell collapsing a front of house in "The Adams Family", to mention but a few triumphs.

He was first out and last in, with so many performances in the Town

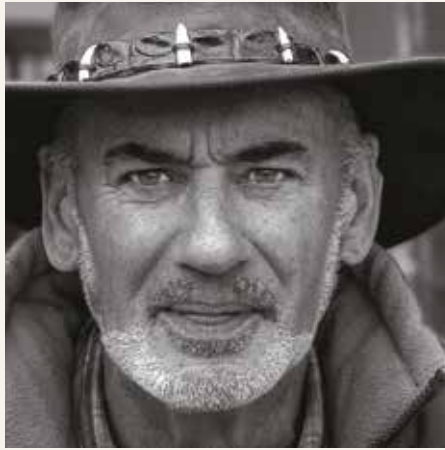


Photo by Robert Riddell

Hall, always available for the load in and indeed the dreaded tidy up.

He served with distinction as a Director of the new constituted Theatre which he loved with passion and indeed was a valued committee member of most of the performance art groupings in town and one time or another.

He was an Honorary Life member of the Ballinasloe Musical Society but a member for over 45 years through good years and not so, he loved revelling on the many occasions at the Annual Oscars in Killarney when BMS would not alone receive a nomination but when they would sweep the boards.

Pat was unique in that as an only child, he was one of life's special givers. In the truest sense he gave all of his talents and especially his time to a myriad of community events and activities – Paddy's Day Parade, Fair and Festival, Fleadh Cheols, Homecomings, Fundraising Concerts, People of the Year Awards, Zombie Walks, Xmas Lights, School Productions the list is endless.

There was no former AT Cross Employee or indeed neighbours of friends of Pat's to whom he did not quietly render aid, or assistance whenever required and sometimes when not. There were countless Farmers and heavy plant operators who came to pay their respects who marvelled at his diagnostic skill in putting any collapsed moving part to rights.

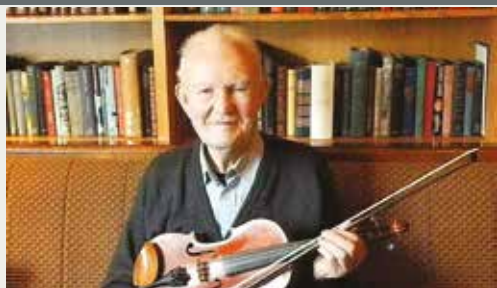
His demeanour and disposition was always cheerful and no matter how tricky a rehearsal or day was going - it was made brighter from a rendezvous with Gentleman Pat who had a witty story for every second, or every minute of every hour including his wind down favourite scotch and pep.!. Late of Suckfield, and formerly of Gubnaveigh, Aghacashel, to his children Keith and Amy, together with their sister Lynn, brother Gary and mother Evelyn,, his wider family and huge circle of neighbours, friends we offer our sincere sympathies.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

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GIFTED MUSICIAN AND GARDENER MOURNED



Former Hall of Fame Award Winner, Champion Gardener, Ardent Comhaltas member, devoted Family man and Centurian Tom Quinn from Upper Brackernagh, Ballinasloe, was given a heartfelt musical farewell by fellow colleagues and family at St. Michael's Church and indeed at the Cemetery late this January. He would have been very proud of the musical send off with so many family and friends that had gathered and to top it off, no doubt he smiled down as his granddaughter, Niamh took his fiddle and played a final slow air for her grandfather.

One of Ireland's oldest fiddle players Tom, originally from Athenry, had a great love for Irish traditional music all his life, having started the fiddle around the age of 14 in 1933. He often recounted the tale that his brother wanted to buy a gun and his mother wouldn't let him - as a compromise she bought him a fiddle!

He studied his craft under Jack Mulkere, the legendary south Galway fiddle player based in Crusheen. It wasn't long before Tom was putting the skills he learned to the test in the dancehalls and pubs of the west, having performed with numerous groups throughout the forties and fifties, during the golden years of the Céilí Band.

He always put his secret to living such a long life down to the fact that he never drank or smoke despite its prevalence in all locations that he performed in. He moved to town in 1941, working in St Brigid's hospital for 42 years and it was there that he discovered his second passion, gardening - which he discovered a huge gra for and kept it up after he retired in 1983.

He continued to grow his own vegetables and had been exhibiting at horticultural shows since the 1960's. His exhibits were in vegetables, fruit, and flowers. He was a judge at the Tullamore Show in 1993. In 2009 at the age of ninety, he decided to enter his tomatoes at the show and has been a regular competitor since then till last year.

He married the love of his life Lily in 1951. They were together for nearly 60 years before she died nine years ago at the age of 87.

Alongside playing with the local Comhaltas Group in Burkes Emerald Bar on Fridays, he also enjoyed performing in the social services centre in Brackernagh on Tuesdays.

He is a huge loss to the town, as a character, everybody had a good word to say about Tom. What a gentleman, gardener and musician and will be missed by all.

To his daughters Maura (Milne) and Anne (Mulhern); his sons Jim, Thomás and Declan; daughters-in-law Valerie, Siobhán and Cathy; sons-in-law Tom and Paul; his 14 grandchildren Shane, David, Ian, Adrian, Niall, Sinéad, Ciara, Róisín, Seán, John, Ruth, Claire, Eoin and Niamh; his 9 great-grandchildren Lois, Rosalie, Alfred, Lily, Alex, Órlagh, Sadbh, Tadhg and Alanah; nieces Mary and Anne, nephew Tommy; in-laws, many relatives, kind neighbours and lots of great friends we send our condolences.

BY COLM CROFFY

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SPORTSMAN, FISHERMAN TOM BURKE



Ballinasloe lost one of its much loved citizens with the passing of Peter (Tom) Burke. Born in Brackernagh, one of a family of ten, whose parents were Mary and Joe Burke, Tom as he was popularly known, passed away after a short illness. He had also resided in St. Joseph's Place, Curragh Park and Poolboy.

Following his schooling, Tom went to work in Dubarry Factory before serving his apprenticeship as a painter and decorator with the late Vincent Higgins. Following a short stint in England, Tom joined the maintenance staff at St. Brigid's Hospital for many years as a painter before being made redundant.

A keen sportsman, Tom won Under 21 county hurling titles with Ballinasloe in the 70's and was a key player with St. Joseph's in the Town Soccer League. He loved fishing, particularly during the salmon season when he often travelled to different parts of the county in search of the prize fish. A kind, witty, chatty gentleman, he could be often seen out walking his dogs and his sudden demise came as a great shock to all who knew him.

BY KEN KELLY

PARISH COUNCIL HELP

BY LIAM COSGROVE

Over the past several months the Parish Pastoral Council has continued to meet to look at issues affecting the parish. As a Council, they have decided to select one or two projects which they can focus on and bring to fruition. They continue to give their support to the priests of the parish who are as always under huge pressure to meet the needs of the parishioners.

The Council recently took part in further training with Mr Martin Kennedy. They feel strongly that there are always opportunities to seek guidance in their work.

In light of the Corona Virus we would encourage all people to support each other during this uncertain time. In the context of the present situation, they have no events planned and have suspended further meetings.



Parish Council Members

For those who cannot attend mass we would encourage you to use Church Service TV where you can be part of mass in many of the churches in Ireland, including Loughrea Cathedral. The site can be found on www.churchservices.tv The parish newsletter can also be found on the Ballinasloe.ie website.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

BY LIAM COSGROVE

This year's Women's World Day of Prayer was hosted at Creagh Church and led by Maureen Casey. Prepared by the women of Zimbabwe, Women's World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical Christian laywomen's initiative and is celebrated annually in over 170 countries on the first Friday in March. Every year, the worship service focuses on a different country and a specific theme. The theme for the annual ecumenical service was "Rise – take up your mat and walk" and based on the Bible reading in John 5:2.

The readers came from Creagh, St Michael's and St John's Churches and a committee with Maureen Casey, Penny Kearney, Ann McCullagh, Agnes & Una Dignan, Muriel Duthie, Jackie Eastwood, Jane Treacy, Deirdre Lyons, and Valerie Swanwick had been meeting to share the Bible study and prepare the service.

Maureen Casey explained during the service that the Women's World Day of Prayer is celebrated throughout the world in many churches, universities, organisations, schools and in people's homes.

The altar was decorated with the colours of the Zimbabwean flag together with a painting of their national flower, the flame lily, by local artist Jackie Eastwood. Music for the evening was provided by Nellie Hurley-Mocclair accompanied by members of the choir. Refreshments following the service were hosted by the Parish Pastoral Council Hospitality Committee and allowed time for a chat and catch up among the congregation.



The altar at Creagh Church with the colours of the Zimbabwean flag and a painting of their national flower by local artist Jackie Eastwood.

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TIDY TOWNS COMMITTEE SEEK MORE ASSISTANCE

The local Tidy Towns Committee has been working throughout the winter months on ground maintenance and preparation of beds in several parts of town. Their overall strategy is to reduce or remove beds that are difficult to maintain while upgrading others with more sustainable plants that require less maintenance and are more environmentally sensitive.

The group are on the rise and this is evident from their recent marks they received in the Supervalu Tidy Towns Adjudication report. There were major upgrades from the 2018 report – receiving increased marks in areas such as Community Involvement, Green Spaces and Landscaping Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality. They didn't receive any negative marks which shows how much the group is consolidating with every year.

They were complimented on the beautiful planting on both sides of the entrance at Creagh Cemetery, where the yellow roses caught their attention and the entrance gate which was black and white railing is freshly painted. They also impressed the judges with the wide variety of plants at Creagh Training Centre.

They were also dazzled by the large variety of species used in the planting at Slí na hAbhainn, the Grand Canal roundabout and the Marina. They achieved some 308 out of a possible 470 marks.

In the IBAL League National Litter 2019 Survey conducted by An Taisce, it found Ballinasloe 26th out of 40 Towns / Cities surveyed and Clean to European Norms. This was a good recovery for the town having lost its Clean status at the end of 2018. Top ranking sites included all approach roads, the residential area of St. Joseph's Place and the Train Station.

Not only were they good with regard to litter but they also presented very well. By far the most heavily littered site was the Main Street –



Eric Naughton and Patrick Ward planting for Biodiversity Project at Creagh Junction.

not only were litter levels very high but the overall impression was of a very tired and neglected street. It is rare in IBAL litter surveys to see main streets score so poorly. A sub-committee was established at a recent meeting of the group with a view to prioritising the key goals of the group and ensuring these tasks are finished.

They want to increase the numbers of volunteers participating in National Spring Clean planned for the month of April. Approaches are to be made to the local business community in a renewed campaign to promote the town as a positive litter-free place to visit, now that the Town Enhancement Scheme is well advanced. They also want to tackle and upgrade many of the old derelict buildings throughout the area. They'll be doing this through the Shop Fronts Enhancement Scheme. They will also promote and support 'Youth Work Ireland' in their Art Project at St. Michael's Playground.

As always, the committee is open to suggestions and is seeking support from new and existing volunteers of all ages. Please contact ballinasloetidytowns@gmail.co 0868179580 or their Facebook page for how you can participate.

BY LIAM COSGROVE

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LOCAL LIBRARIAN INSISTS THE NEW LIBRARY IS NOT JUST ABOUT BOOKS!

BY LIAM COSGROVE



Una Kelly

Una Kelly, the Librarian in the local Europe Direct Library, was appointed to oversee the management and development of our new look library in late 2017. Having been brought up in Cavan, she moved to Kells in Co. Meath at the age of 15. During her childhood years, one of her favourite hobbies was reading. She had three copies of the book Heidi which she read "on more than a few occasions".

As she grew up, she became an avid reader of Agatha Christie's series of books, also becoming enthralled by the "Little Women" series.

After her schooling days, she attended Trinity College Dublin, where she received a degree in Business Studies. When she graduated, she got a post as a part time bookkeeper in Kinvara (which is now home), which she maintained for five years.

Quickly she realised that the job wasn't for her, so she began a distance learning librarianship course with the Aberystwyth University in Wales. It has the oldest librarianship courses in the UK and also one of the oldest in the world. The University is world renowned for its librarianship courses.

Her older sister is a librarian and had a major impact on why she decided to direct her career this way. She also hung out around her sister's library and her love for comics was born. She spent many hours of her childhood in the library reading all sorts of novels, comics etc. She has organised the local Comic Con event held in the library over the past few years. Unfortunately, the Comic Con Festival has been postponed this year due to the outbreak.

Her first posts with the books were in the Dublin City public library and in DIT. Both different jobs with different requirements with one being an education institutions' library. She moved to Galway where she worked in the NUI Galway library, Oranmore Library and the Ballybane Library. It was from the Ballybane Branch that she received the librarianship post here.

One of her many accomplishments has been to introduce children activities and make the library a more family friendly place. Many events such as the annual Comic Con, Lego clubs, Reading Competitions, Art Exhibitions, Knitting and women's groups take place in the library on a weekly basis. The venue also holds the annual soapbox competition. It has fast become a significant hub of activity for the community.

She has played a major role in bringing events away from Galway to the locality as part of Galway 2020. Events such as the 'Zones of Transit' event being hosted by Ciaran Og Arnold and Francis Heery. It is an art showcase and exhibition in early May which will hopefully go ahead.

She is hoping to also get the good word out about libraries to schools by placing information stands at public events, hosting talks and attending career fairs at these schools.

Una is a strong believer that everyone should have a library card no matter the age. Library activities are year round and there is always something happening for people of different interests even though many people have the opposite perception to this. A library card can be used in all libraries across the country – not just for your local branch.

"Children tend to read if they see their elders reading and as a result, they tend to have better reading skills themselves. There are also supports for reluctant readers such as audio books, books in dyslexic fonts and silent books with no words. No fines are applied on late or damaged books and there is an easier access than ever to ebooks. The library buys books nationally which makes them cheaper to provide," explains Una.

She is also a strong believer in different groups from the community working together. She says "the library is a community space. It is a natural place for people to meet and having it in the middle of town is a great asset. Retirement groups meet in the library now. It's open to supporting local groups to host events such as women's groups, bumps and babes".

Normal opening times are Tues: 11.00 am-13.00 pm, 14.00-20.00: Wed – Sat: 11.00-13.00 and 14.00 to 17.00. The library is now closed due to the coronavirus outbreak. Keep an eye on the library's Facebook and Twitter pages, Europe Direct Library Ballinasloe, for updates on when it'll be reopening.



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JUMPER DAY RAISES OVER €11K

BY LIAM COSGROVE

The East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre were recently presented with their cheque of €11,029.64 which was raised through the Christmas Jumper Day appeal.

The Annual Event organised to raise money for worthy causes, took place in schools and businesses which saw the general public dress up in their festive jumpers and Santa hats.

It was a fun event where everyone got involved. The principal of Kiltormer National School, Grainne Dooley, said "it was one of the best days that they have had in the school for years and that they are already looking forward to the Jumper Day 2020".

East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre provides counselling, support and therapies for people receiving treatment for cancer and their families and friends. A bus is also provided to Galway for radiotherapy treatments every day and on return, they're provided with a hot lunch. All services are provided free of charge and fundraising events such as these are what make this service possible.



Jumper day Committee. Carmel Dillon, Patricia Lawless, Geraldine Deane, Annmarie Nevin & Brónagh Deane.



Back: Mossy Concannon, Carmel Dillon, Mary Burke, Patricia Lawless, Kenny, Annmarie Nevin & Geraldine Deane
Front: Mary Conlon, Áine Kenny, Abbie Goode, Katie Curley & Tony Kenny.



Jackie Guider, Katie Curley, Abbie Goode Áine Kenny & Mossy Concannon.

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ACTIVE RETIREES REVIEW HECTIC YEAR



Back row: Fr. Benny Flanagan, Chris O'Flynn, MI. Colohan, Deirdre Hogan, Ann Duffy, Mary Quirke. Front row: Goretti Fallon, Mgt. McDonnell, Mgt Brennan, Mary Slattery

A large attendance gathered for the Local Active Retirement AGM which was held in the Library recently which confirmed enrolment of the 18-year-old organisation at over the 200 mark.

Chairperson Margaret Brennan, welcomed everyone especially new members and then gave a detailed report on all of the activities and events enjoyed by the members throughout the year. With a current membership of 213, the association is continuing to go from strength to strength since it opened just 18 years ago.

The local branch is part of a nationwide organisation that continues to attract new groups and members. In 1992, membership was over 6,000 in 68 local groups. Rebranded in the late 90s and known as Active Retirement Ireland, they now represent over 24,500 members in more than 570 local associations nationwide

The aim of the group is to enhance the physical, social and psychological well-being of retired people in the town and hinterland. It helps to eliminate loneliness through friendship, information and communication. Members can avail of a wide range

of activities, holidays, outings and socials, sports and community works.

There were excellent reports from all the various activities and sections. These include knitting on Mondays, a very active and enjoyable walking club on Tuesdays, A.R.A. meetings on Wednesdays, Singing on Thursdays under the direction of Marie Power. There is also a book club and a successful bowls club. Aquarobics is available on Mondays and Thursdays. All meetings and events of the club have also been sadly cancelled until further notice due to the coronavirus outbreak.

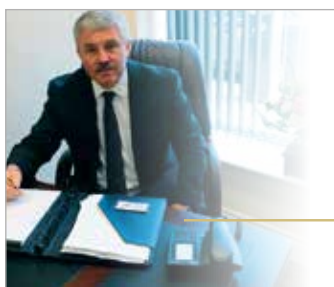
As always, members took part in plenty of different events throughout the year. Ten members attended a digital skills computer course. They attended many events and achieved loads of awards throughout the year, once again being named prize-winners in the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Supported by the remembrance ceremony of the Teampolín in Poolboy, the dedicated B.A.R.A. singers held a very successful concert in Gullane's Hotel. The proceeds from this event were given to two local charities.

They went on many trips throughout the year, visiting the Avoca Gardens in Carlow, a tour of the Smithwicks Experience in Kilkenny while also visiting Westport and Clew Bay in July. The major trip of the year was visiting the ancient Polish city of Krakow which included a tour of Auschwitz.



MI Colohan, Nancy Carr, Maura Rafter, Laura Naughton



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As another year approaches, the Social Committee were working on more exciting plans for next year. Sadly the Spring break in May to Ballycotton, East Cork followed in June by a four-day tour of Liverpool and surrounding area have all been put on ice. The sun worshippers were meant to be headed to Cambrils in Spain's Costa Dorada in October and again they will be advising members as the travel restrictions ease.

New members are always welcome. Enquiries to: Mgt. Brennan, Ph.090 9642061 or Chris O'Flynn (PRO) Ph. 087 6492466 or visit our website <http://ballinasloeactiveretirement.blogspot.com/>



Deirdre Hogan, Margaret Brennan, Mary Slattery

CAHALAN JEWELLERS TEMPORARILY CLOSED



Typing this, in luxurious isolation in the colourful Springtime countryside. What a pity such a negative and fearful thing had to descend on us in this beautiful country and world of ours.

There are so many "experts" telling us why it came and how it came and they are all even more frightening than the virus itself. I believe things happen in everyone's lifetime.

We have had T.B., Polio and

when I was in National School we had the threat of the 3 dark days and then the end of the world. As I grew up and saw people dying from natural causes or accidents I suddenly realised that was the end of the world for them and of course the end of the world comes for many every day and it seems greater these last weeks.

Getting back to my own work, my shop is closed and that will reopen the moment that we know there is no more worry about the spread of the virus. For now, we at Cahalan Jewellers are going to do what the The Women's Jewellery Network was set up to do:

To support the global ambitions of the female led organizations, Be more aware of specific reference to equality, diversity and inclusion,* To prove the mission and ambition of the organization/network..... we have always embraced the idea that those who identify as male would play a role,* Despite assumptions being made the Network is NOT exclusionary.

Why I mention the above is that it is very relevant in our world today. We must support each other by respect and social distance. We have to be aware of equality, diversity and inclusion. Regardless of what colour or creed our neighbour is we must support and include themwe are all human with the same worries & needs.

We will all be out and about again, we will greet and meet and hopefully be happy we did the right things for each other. This is a pause in our lives which helps us to reflect and meditate and balance ourselves. We need to return to the centre or basics and start again. Hopefully we have got our chance !

Wishing you all well and safety from Maureen and staff at Cahalan Jewellers, Main Street.

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SCOIL UÍ CHEITHEARNAIGH PUPILS STORM GALWAY STAGE

Thug Rang a Dó aghaidh ar amharclann na cathrach, Gaillimh le déanaí lena seó 'Peadar Piongain agus a chairde'. An príomh teachtaireacht a bhí sa dráma seo ná conas aire a thabhairt don domhan. Léirigh siad an teachtaireacht seo trí súile na piongainí agus na béir a bhí ag cailliúint a mbaile.

Bhí an leac oighir ag leá mórthimpeall orthu agus bhí faitíos ag teacht orthu. D'aontaigh siad du lar thuras timpeall an domhain go bhfeicidís cé a bhí ag truailliú an domhan. Thaistil siad go hÉirinn ar dtús agus chonaic siad páistí na hÉireann ina suí ag spraoi lena gcuid cluichí leictreonacha in ionad a bheith taobh amuigh faoin aer. Chan na béir agus na piongainí cúpla amhrán dóibh agus diaidh ar ndiaidh tháinig feabhas orthu agus thosaíodar ag tabhairt aire níos fearr don domhan.

The pupils of Rang a Dó, Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh took to the stage in the Town Hall Theatre, Galway recently with their show 'Peadar Piongain agus a chairde'. The main message of the show was to show how humans were having a negative impact on the world, wasting electricity, over reliance on cars and not thinking about the effect of their actions on the wider world.



Group Photo outside the Town Hall.
Rang a Dó, Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh ag glacadh páirt i bhféile drámaíochta Gael Linn le déanaí.



Children from the Junior Room in The Glebe NS, Aughrim, celebrating World Book Day with dioramas that they made of their favourite books



Left to right: Jack Curley, Anneliese Godfrey, Adam Newton, Lauren Newton, Ronan McDonagh, Lexi Hyde, Carly Hyde, Emer Curley, Lydia Newton.

The bears and the penguins relayed this message to the children of Ireland and they taught them right from wrong. The children of Ireland were very enthused and impressed by their message so they started to act more economically! The children were given two awards by the judge. Their first award is for the active participation of all in every spoken word, song and dance routine. They received another honor for the important message of caring for the world portrayed in a very engaging way through song and dance. It was a great opportunity for the children to perform on this stage and to get such an important message across too.

BY LIAM COSGROVE



BALLINASLOE BOYS' NS 4th CLASS (1958)

Front row, l to r: John Treacy, Paddy Seale, Marcus McInerney, Willie Tully, Ger Murray, Gerry Kelly, Tom Perrem, Colm McCrea, John Dodd, Oliver Hogan, Mickie Connor, John Boyle, Peter O'Connor, Tom Mullins, John Hall, Ronnie Holian, P.J. Guinnessy.

Middle row, l to r: Paddy Connor, Adrian Brennan, Eddie McKenna, Eamon Gullane, Greg Curley, Willie Devlin, Joe Johnston, Eamon Dempsey, Des Regan, Brendan McNally, Peter Murphy, Tom Gill, Liam O'Neill, Eamon Naughton.

Back row, l to r: Mr. Patrick T. Galvin NT, George Hurley, Guy Perrem, Seamus Fogarty, Francis Holohan, Seamus Burke, Sean (John) Egan, Michael Meade, Brendan Bannerton, Francis Finnerty, Eugene Kelly, Billy Maloney, Edward Deeney, Bonnie Crosby

Photo courtesy of Brendan Bannerton. E & O E.

CLONTUSKERT SCHOOL'S TRACTOR RUN



A local Tractor Run held in aid of the East Galway & Midland Cancer Support Centre was organised and coordinated by the Parents Association of St. Augustine's National School in Clontuskert.

The Ballinasloe Rugby Club grounds was the rendezvous for 63 tractors of all shapes and sizes. Many people were awoken by the roar of tractors congregating in Clontuskert. The €2,900 raised supplied the school and the centre with much need funds.

The tractor orientated event was originally the brainchild of the late John Paul Butler Snr. who was a lifelong machinery operator. His son John, a member of the Parents Association, proposed and coordinated the event with the help of the Association members, local volunteers, neighbours, friends and acquaintances.

Tractors began to gather from 9am while their attendees were treated to morning refreshments organised by the volunteers around the clubhouse.

While Stephen Scannell and Ruth Curley organised the registration, A.J. Poland, Shane O'Connell along with Ivan Mullins and his team carefully utilised the valuable space and marshalled the tractors into their respective positions. Many of the volunteers had the opportunity to meet the school principal Kate Murray who attended the event.

Prior to take off, John Salmon issued a safety briefing to the participants in the clubhouse and he proceeded to lead the group on the epic journey. Pdraig Gorman from Eyrecourt, was designated as the pacesetter in his Fordson Dexta. Ironically the last tractor in the convoy was owned by Hogan Tractors, a limited edition T5.120 Fiat Centenario manufactured by New Holland another part of the Fordson progeny.

As the convoy headed across the top of the Escir Riada taking in the stunning views of Glenaloughan and Cornfield before descending "Coens Hill" passing Tristaun Mill and Hurney's Forge traversing the Battlefield towards Aughrim village. It then proceeded to Cappataggle and on to Mullagh via Ballydonnellan before returning to Kiltormer village via Clonlahan Bridge and finishing up in the

parish of Kiltormer where they were greeted with refreshments in the Mother's Select Bar by Breda Kenny.



Presentation of proceeds from the Clontuskert Parents Association Tractor Run to East Galway & Midland Cancer Support Centre & to St Augustine's National School. Joined by the pupils of St Augustine's National School Clontuskert were: Front Row L to R Kate Murray, John Paul & Méabh Butler, Mossie Concannon, Jacqueline Daly, A.J. Poland, Elaine Butler.



The late John Paul Butler Snr on April 12th 1947.

BY LIAM COSGROVE

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OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE



Amanda Kelly of Mackney, Ballinasloe and Shane Muldoon of Ganaveen, Clontuskert, who got married in Clontuskert Church. The reception was in the Hodson Bay Hotel.



End of an Era on Dunlo Street on Saturday 14th March last when Chris Daly closed his shoe shop for the last time. Wishing Chris and his family all the best as he settles back to farming having devoted his time to retail first in Kellers of Main Street, before opening his own shoe shop in the old Toddy Hogan shoe shop in Dunlo Street and then moving into his recent location 15 years ago in the middle of Dunlo Street. He served the locality with quality footwear, lovely courtesy and efficiency.



Luke Manning, Ballinasloe & District Athletics Club winning Bronze in the U15 boys 60 metre at Athlone IT Connacht Indoors



Cillian Ó Tuairisg, Ballinasloe & District Athletics Club winning Silver in the boys U13 Shot Put

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OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE



Second prize Shearwater voucher went to Martina Reynolds from the bread basket



Maisie Manning first prize collected by Michael Manning



Members of the Cupan Tae Art Group presenting their painting "Tree of Life" to representatives of the Ballinasloe Cancer Support Centre. From left to right: Lily Brien, Bertha Forrestal, Claire Finn, Frances Hurley, Cathy Keogh, Marie Dolan, Ann McCullagh, Teresa Reynolds and Jackie Eastwood.

Ballinasloe Cancer Centre New Art Work

Jackie Eastwood, a member of the local Cupan Tae Art Group, kindly donated a painting to the Cancer Centre which now takes pride on the new premises' communal room wall. The Volunteers held a Valentines Raffle with prize donations from the Shearwater Hotel and Venezia Restaurant. Maisie Manning came away with the first

prize of a hamper with loads of treats while Martina Reynolds came in second with a Shearwater Hotel voucher. Third prize went to Ayesha Ahmid who won a Venezia Restaurant Voucher.

In these strange and unsure times, some people can find themselves with added stress and the cancer support centre can

offer counselling with their therapist over the phone to clients free of charge. Their office is currently closed to the public but they can provide any support you may need as they continue to work from home. You can contact them on 090 964 9767 and they can arrange a counselling session.



Views of town's newest Industrial Factory - Western Postform's state of the art facility at Poolboy. Awaiting Commissioning and formal opening in some weeks time.

A SUGGESTED PRAYER:

A PRAYER IN THE TIME OF THE CORONAVIRUS

Archbishop Michael Jackson
Dublin & Glendalough

Almighty and All-loving God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we pray to you through Christ the Healer
for those who suffer from the Coronavirus Covid-19
in Ireland and across the world.

We pray too for all who reach out to those who mourn
the loss
of each and every person who has died as a result of
contracting the disease.

Give wisdom to policymakers,
skill to healthcare professionals and researchers,
comfort to everyone in distress
and a sense of calm to us all in these days of
uncertainty and distress.

This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord
who showed compassion to the outcast,

acceptance to the rejected
and love to those to whom no love was shown.

Amen.

AN EASTER MESSAGE

From Reverend John Godfrey



Easter time is the most sacred time of the year for all Christian communities, and yet this Easter we face the stark reality of being unable to come together to celebrate the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is clear from government health guidelines, that any public gathering at this time, either inside our church buildings or in our church grounds, would represent an unacceptable risk to public safety. The sole exception is in the event of funerals, which should be attended by the next of kin only, whilst observing appropriate social distancing and hygiene protocols. In the midst of the Covid-19 Coronavirus crisis, we are called to show the love of Christ by staying apart from each other.

However, in this time of enforced isolation, we are learning just how closely connected we all are. Rarely has it been so clear that each of our actions has the potential to effect the lives of countless other people, known and unknown to us. The spread of the Coronavirus across the globe makes a nonsense of the tribal identities which the human race so often clings to. We are all in this together.

We are also learning about humility and gratitude, through our new-found experience of powerlessness. Most of the plans that we had busied ourselves making are now meaningless, because this disease has robbed us of the agency which we normally take for granted. We realise now just how indebted we are to all those people on whom our wellbeing depends: the front-line staff in our hospitals, medical centres and pharmacies; the staff in our supermarkets; those who are maintaining supply chains; people who continue to provide essential services. Standing at the till, with food in the trolley, is now an invitation to profound gratitude: "Give us this day our daily bread."

As we grow into a deeper understanding of our shared humanity, we can also grow into a deeper appreciation of the message of Holy Week. In the life and death of Jesus Christ, God shared fully in the human experience which unites us. Jesus himself understood just how intimately connected he was to the rest of humanity. He knew that his actions had the potential to effect the lives of countless people around the world. That's how he found the courage to face up to his own suffering and death, with love and compassion for in his heart for the whole world. On the cross, Jesus carried the love of God into even the darkest of human experiences. That is a precious message for us all in our present suffering, as we watch and pray, through these troubled times, for the light of the resurrection to dispel this present darkness.

EASTER MESSAGE

From Rev. John Garvey ADM



We have entered into a strange and unprecedented time and are unsure about how long it will last or how we will be impacted by the Corona Virus. Feelings of anxiety, fear, vulnerability and loss of control to name but some arise for us. Our routines have been disrupted and we have been asked to physically distance ourselves from other people. We are in unfamiliar territory.

I watched Big Life Fix – episode four on RTE television (available on RTE Player). This series features people with a physical disability being offered help, so as to enhance the quality of their lives, by designers of new technology.

Erin Power from Balbriggan, Dublin was one of the people to whom support was offered. She is a sixteen-year-old girl who was born without arms. She needs the ongoing assistance of another person for dressing and toileting purposes. However, she is able to feed herself, wash her teeth and complete her homework assignments by using her feet. She hopes to go to college and pursue a writing career. In a promotional interview for the programme she said "I make use of everything I have".

People are using this time of restrictions to take stock and assess what is of value - more time with children, reading, gardening, walking, praying.

It looks like families will be celebrating Easter in their own homes this year. Television, radio and live-streaming will broadcast ceremonies. Details will continue to be made available through the Parish Bulletin which can be downloaded at www.ballinasloe.ie (Go to Home Page on website & scroll down to & click on Parish Pastoral Council). All are encouraged to join spiritually in the celebration of Mass from their own homes.

As we approach Holy Week and Easter we remember that in Jesus, God walks the journey of life with us. God suffers when humanity suffers. "Even though I walk in the valley of darkness, I will not fear for you are with me". Psalm 23.

May we know in a new way not only that God's spirit is with us but also that God's spirit is within us.

May this indwelling presence be a source of calm and re-assurance for us that all things are in God's hands. May each of us have a safe and blessed Easter. May we make use of everything that we have.



COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)
UPDATED GUIDANCE

DIOCESE OF CLONFERT

Bishop Michael Duignan



The public celebration of all Sunday Masses and Weekday Masses in the Diocese of Clonfert is cancelled. During this time the obligation to be physically present at Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day is suspended. Priests will continue to celebrate Mass (including Mass booked for an intention) but without a congregation. All are encouraged to join spiritually in the celebration of Mass from their own homes (resources are available at clonfertdiocese.ie) or by means of parish radio or web-cam or through television and radio broadcasts. For example, Mass from the Cathedral, Loughrea on www.loughreacathedral.ie. Churches throughout the Diocese of Clonfert will remain open for individual prayer. Please enter only in small numbers and observe strict social distancing and hygiene routines.

Funeral Mass may proceed, but must be limited to immediate family only. Persons considered vulnerable should stay at home. Standard guidance with regard to safe distancing and physical contact should be observed along with HSE guidelines for the funerals of those who have died of Covid-19. Only the Priest, Funeral Directors and the immediate family group that attended the Mass, should proceed to the cemetery or crematorium. We will always offer Mass for the deceased, if requested, even if it comes to the point that there can be no congregation.

Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Sick will be celebrated on request only. This will occur only after a conversation (preferably by telephone) with your local Priest who will assess the situation and advise accordingly. Additional safety measures will apply. All are reminded that if you cannot receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, God's forgiveness is available by making a sincere examination of conscience, an act of contrition and intending to frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation once it is possible to do so (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1452)

It is recommended that the Sacrament Baptism be deferred. If a Baptism is to proceed participation is limited to Parents, Godparents and the Child. In the case of grave illness or danger or death please contact your local priest who will guide you. The Sacrament of Marriage may only be celebrated on the understanding that participation is limited to the couple themselves, their two witnesses and the priest. The celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation, First Confession, and First Holy Communion, along with all house visits, first Friday visits, and all Church meetings are postponed.

In these times of need, we pray for God's help. We are also called to generously play our part and work for the common good by reaching out, as appropriate, to practically assist those who are impacted by this situation. Parishioners throughout the Diocese are encouraged to do so.

COVID-19

PRAYER AT THIS TIME OF UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS

Fr. John Garvey ADM.

God of Love and Mercy,

We pray for our world - for all of us, each one now in some way impacted by COVID-19; but especially for those persons who are ill, those who have lost loved ones and those whose personal and work lives have been severely disrupted by the reach of this virus.

We give thanks for the tender care of the sick by doctors, nurses and health care workers, for the generous and willing service of volunteers and for the imagination and dedication of researchers seeking a cure. We are grateful for those who share wise advice with us; those whose work creates healthy environments for us; those who put our needs before theirs, our safety before theirs, our well-being before theirs.

May we each be supportive of one another, considerate of one another and generous to one another in this difficult and uncertain time.

Amen.

TELEVISED MASS OR MASS VIA WEBCAM

Weekday Mass is broadcast every day on RTE news now at 10.30am

Sunday Mass

Galway Bay FM will broadcast Mass, celebrated at 11.30am www.galwaybayfm.ie

Shannonside Radio will broadcast Mass at 10.00am. www.shannonside.ie

Mass is available every Saturday evening at 8pm and Sunday at 10am and 12 noon from Loughrea Cathedral via webcam at www.loughreacathedral.ie

Keeping Connected

Why not visit Clonfert Diocese Facebook Page or follow on Clonfert Diocese on Twitter.



LIVING IN CHINA DURING THE CORONA OUTBREAK



Writes Cathal Kelly

Brackernagh native, son of Peter and Margaret Kelly – Cathal emigrated to teach English in China some three years ago. He was caught up in the eye of the Corona Storm and sent us this report.

"What is a Coronavirus?" asked a student one afternoon in late January. "I've absolutely no idea, let's find out" I replied. Little did we know that eventually the whole world - including Ireland, would know.

I've lived in Wuxi, China since November 2017 where I teach adults English for EF-a Swedish founded company with branches all over the world. Wuxi City with a population of six million people and located in Jiangsu province, lies approximately 450 miles east of Wuhan where the virus originated. Wuxi people are extremely warm and in relation to family and friends are very much like the Irish. Grandparents pick up grandchildren after school and friends look out for friends.

My life here is pretty normal and I'm well settled. Making local friends helps me feel a greater connection to my environment. On my days off I've the option of playing badminton, kick football, go cycle around the countryside or just hang out with mates for dinner, followed by a few beers and some pool. I miss Ireland very much, however I consider myself quite fortunate to feel home-from-home here in Wuxi.

Anticipating Chinese New Year I bought in extra supplies. CNY is very much like our Christmas and extends for an entire week. Many shops and restaurants close as people spend time with family. However, this CNY had an ominous start as the severity of this virus

began to emerge. Quickly the government extended the holiday an extra week to curtail the movement of people. They also ordered that all schools, universities, education centres, factories etc. remain closed for the foreseeable future.

Things suddenly got serious. The local government in my city were extremely quick to react. Roads were cordoned off and nobody permitted into Wuxi. People were strongly advised to stay indoors and all retail outlets, bars and restaurants remained shut. Only supermarkets were allowed open and a special QR code that proved you were allowed in the city was required to gain access. Also your temperature was checked at the door. I suddenly felt like a character in a Twilight Zone episode.

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However, I never felt overly anxious or bought into the “doom and gloom” mentality floating around certain media outlets and chat groups. Nor did I once consider leaving China. Contracting the virus never concerned me, however as potential carriers everyone followed advice and protocol. As I live alone, I must admit that this time was surreal. The two week total shutdown resulted in days melding into each other accompanied with an inconsistent sleeping routine. Daytime China is a cacophony of constant car horns, chit chat or construction. This new daytime silence proved extremely eerie.

My company soon moved all teachers to an online platform thus ensuring job security which alleviated personal concerns. Amusingly, several fretting friends and students offered to bring me food! I had to make a video showing my fully stocked kitchen

which I also sent to my family to also appease their concerns. It was comforting to receive daily messages from friends even if we could not meet up. Another plus, I started cooking again and continued my long arduous task learning Chinese.

I even started my own YouTube channel. When restrictions lightened up I interviewed expats and local people. Check it out, just search “Cathal Kelly” on YouTube. My aim is to negate the “fear merchants” and just show the reality of the situation here. Things are slowly returning to normal. There was never any mass panic. People knew this was serious but temporary. I’m delighted to see restaurants opening again, bringing back a sense of normality. I’m also looking forward to returning to the classroom, eating “hotpot” with my buddies and putting this whole situation behind us. This will pass.



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CANCER SUPPORT CENTRE TO MAN 24 HOUR HELPLINE



L to R: Thomas Concannon (Chairman of the Committee), Caitriona Duggan, Helen Greally, Jacqueline Daly, Dr Frances Drummond, Honor Geraghty.



L to R: Dr Mary Rogan, Edel Chadwick, Dr Frances Drummond and Jacqueline Daly.



Launch of a booklet titled "Living Well During Cancer Treatment". L to R : Honor Geraghty (Nutritionist), Robert Greene (ECPC Member and founder of HungerNDThirst Foundation), Lisa O'Looney (Physiotherapist) and Jacqueline Daly (Director of Services)

Due to the recent Corona virus outbreak, the Cancer Support Centre based in Brackernagh, remains closed to those attending for treatments/therapies/classes. However their radiotherapy bus to Galway cancer centre is still running and all counselling sessions are available through telephone or skype.

Critically a 24 hour helpline is still open and you can be put through by ringing the centre number 090 96 42088.

A large group attended the East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre for the launch of the booklet titled "Living Well During Cancer Treatment". The booklet was first published in 2018 by ECPC (European Cancer Patients Coalition) to help cancer patients understand the importance of nutrition during and after a cancer diagnosis. The book is free to download on the ECPC website.

There were presentations given by Jacqueline Daly (Director of Services) and Honor Geraghty (Nutritionist) who spoke about the importance of nutrition for patients. Robert Greene (ECPC Member and founder of HungerNDThirst Foundation) spoke on taste alteration during cancer treatment and Lisa O'Looney (Physiotherapist) examined the role of exercise during and after a diagnosis.

The centre also held an event in the Shearwater Hotel which launched the survey results that was undertaken by Dr Frances Drummond; highlighting how East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre meets the unmet needs of cancer patients. This highlighted the supports the centre offers to help struggling locals in the area.

Jacqueline Daly and Dr Mary Rogan (Psychosexual Therapist) gave some insightful presentations as well as Honor Geraghty who talked about the importance of nutrition along with Caitriona Duggan from the ANP Oncology Unit Portlucan Hospital.

The Director of Services in Cancer Care West, Helen Greally addressed the gathering, followed by Lisa O'Looney (Physiotherapist), Edel Chadwick (Patient Advocate). Dr Frances Drummond (BreakThrough Cancer Research) also explained the work he has been doing in cancer research.

They also organised an HPV Awareness Da (Human Papillomavirus – a viral infection passed between people between skin to skin contact). The centre launched a campaign (Breakthrough in Cancer Research) along with the European Cancer Organisation. The aim of this group is to have effective strategies in place by 2030 in order to eliminate cancers caused by HPV.

A greater explanation, by Dr Donal Brennan, of the campaign launched is available on their website egmcancersupport.com.

BY LIAM COSGROVE



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SOCIAL SERVICES VOLUNTEERS CONTINUE TO SERVE



L-R: May Burke, Margaret Sheppard, Mary Martyn, Louise Campbell, Rosaleen Curley

The local Social Services has been in existence since 1972 and over the course of this time, volunteers have played a pivotal role in the development of the organization with over 50 volunteers helping out in these challenging times.

It was those volunteers that initially set up the first service, Meals on Wheels. The Mercy Sisters along with a loyal band of volunteers, delivered meals around the town and its hinterland. This service continues to deliver nourishing meals to people in their homes today, still aided by dedicated volunteers.



L-R: Ann Creaven, Margaret Oliver, Alan Scott, Alacoque Gleeson

This service operates 5 days per week (Monday – Friday) and is managed by a Coordinator and 2 staff. It prepares, cooks and delivers meals to elderly people in the community and the aim of the service is to support independent living through nutritional and social support. Referrals primarily come from Public Health Nurses, Hospital Social Workers, older people and family members.

Nutritious meals are delivered to older people in the town 5 days per week and the outlying areas 3 days per week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday).

Even during the COVID National Emergency they're continuing to deliver meals to people's homes. The drivers do not enter the person's house but drop the meal at the door. However, they speak to the recipient, within current safe distancing guidelines, to ensure the person is well. If anyone wishes to receive a dinner, phone Kay at 087 232 5163.

A family member can contact Kay to discuss the provision of meals for their elderly relative. Payment can be made by cheque at the end of each month or bank details can be provided for payment to be made online. The cost of dinners can vary from €35 to €45 per week for 7 dinners.

Volunteers also play a vital role in the day to day running of the Day Centre. They share their talents and skills with the Centre's staff and attendees. A voluntary band of musicians also entertain every Tuesday afternoon. Due to the recent outbreak, the Day Centre has been sadly closed until further notice.

The Board is comprised of 12 volunteers who meet on a monthly basis to direct strategy, finances and services. Some board members were there in the early 70s when the services were initially started.

The Day Centre and Board volunteers were recently invited to a Volunteer Appreciation Morning, hosted by the Day Centre staff. Food was provided by the staff. Meals on Wheels volunteers will also be hosted to a thank you coffee morning during the year later to be announced.

BY LIAM COSGROVE



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Front row L-R: Maria Finnegan, Margaret Dignan, Marie Connolly (President), Metra Cunningham. Middle Row L-R: Colette Hayes, Mary Davis, Mary Madden, Dymphna Ward, Merlon Tully, Betty Noone, Angela Pender, Kate Lally, Mary Courtney, Rena Lysaght. Back row. L-R: Ann Murphy, Ann O Connell, Fidelma Healy - Eames, Máire Hughes, Jane Enright-Mooney, Rosaleen Cahill, Kitty McHugh, Patricia Dunne, Marie Staunton, Myrnnie Kelly.

Soroptimists International, Ballinasloe recently gathered at the Library Church Gallery to celebrate International Women's Day 2020.

In her opening address, the club's President, Ms. Marie Connolly welcomed everybody. The proceeds of the coffee morning went to Women's Aid. The club is 25 years old this year. To mark the occasion, they intend to plant oak trees in key areas to assist with reducing their carbon footprint.

The keynote speaker Ms Elizabeth Affolter of Blossom Harp Ensemble, gave a detailed presentation on her experiences of Irish rural life when she first arrived in Ireland from France. She told stories about women who were going to 'the snug' in the pub and beverages being brought out to women in the car when no snug was available.

The ladies who gathered shared their experiences of how the life of women has improved over the last few decades. Memories of decisions women had to take, when there was little support available, were discussed. Understanding the cruelty experienced followed typically by the healing that was made possible through perseverance, was encouraging.

Elizabeth also encouraged the gathering to take every opportunity to encourage younger women to reach their full potential. The quiet strength of mothers, aunts, sisters and daughters was shared and appreciated all over again. The coming together of women to support other less fortunate women in their latter years has greatly enriched their lives.

Those gathered feel that it is important to support young women now going into the future. They believe that it's important that the narrative moves from victimhood to championing what they value, which is justice and peace.

Food was provided by Marina Downey of Downey's Bar, Society St. This event was originally meant to be held in Gullane's Hotel before the tragedy of the fire. The great progress being made towards the reopening of the hotel was good news to hear for the assembled.

The group had a concert organised in aid of the Town Band and the Ballinasloe Simon Community but it was cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak. As a result, all upcoming events and meetings of Soroptimist International, Ballinasloe have been postponed.

Soroptimist International Ballinasloe & District are seeking new members. Please contact siballinasloe21@gmail.com or message their Facebook page.

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FIRE AND COVID HALTS DINNY DELANEY FESTIVAL



Sean Michael Radican (from Kerry), winner of the first ever Dinny Delaney Cup

It's already a strange festival cycle when the least of your production problems is an accidental fire that temporarily closes your main venue, but such is the nature of biblical themes swirling in this, the year AD 2020, the year of what's-going-to-happen-next?

A time when Hollywood-style science-fiction nightmares infest our public discourse. A time when we all learn to cope with new concepts like social-distancing, self-quarantine and viral-vectoring. A time when a single, significant, but graciously and gratefully non-fatal incident in a kitchen seems almost quaint by comparison.

And so – as in the rest of the world – with an abundance of caution and understanding much wider circumstances far beyond their control, the committee of The Dinny Delaney Festival of Uilleann Pipers has done the sensible thing and announced a postponement until further notice.

"It wasn't a difficult decision to take," says festival director Frank Owens, "Healthy people, healthy culture, happy times... but safety first."

"We're lucky in some ways," Frank explains, "Although we have a lot of the pre-production work done we haven't printed or published or announced anything yet, so we were still 'under-the-radar' so to speak. But we had done our homework with sponsors and venues and we were ready this year to capitalize on the very solid foundation we had established at our first festival in 2019."

According to Frank, the centre-piece feature of this year's festival, when it returns, is to be the schools' programme. "We had over a dozen schools lined-up to visit with piper Joe Byrne beginning the week of March 30th" Frank recalls. "So when, two weeks before that, they announced the closure of the schools we quickly realised that a central part of this year's festival was going to be next to impossible to run as scheduled, and that would

put the rest of the Festival at a disadvantage while at the same time – even if we were to continue – we might possibly be flying in the face of all reasonable public safety recommendations, and so our original dates on the May Bank Holiday are now untenable.

"And although we're talking to some very 'valuable' musicians about coming to Ballinasloe this year," adds Frank, "We just can't risk our most valuable asset: our audience. Without them we're nothing."

And so the gallop, as they say, is halted. "For now," Frank continues, "but we'll reassess when conditions allow."

Festival producer Mike Casey explains why the schools programme is to be the heart and soul of #Dinny2020. "Dinny Delaney is such an important character in the story of Irish Piping, from the music he wrote, to where he played and when he played, for whom he played and why he played; his story could be one of immense pride to the people of Ballinasloe."

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Frank Owens, Brendan Larrisey and Mick Lamb at the inaugural edition

“And yet the pipes are almost gone from the town and the region. If the instrument is to have any hope to survive and thrive here we need to let people hear it, feel its noise, watch how it’s played, tell its story and the story of the people-with-the-music who play the instrument. Listen and enjoy because a piper in full flight can be quite a spectacle.”

Beginning life in Tulrush (with County Roscommon on their doorstep) Dinny and his sister have migrated to the town as orphaned children when, at the age of 13, Dinny is struck with the Small Pox, an often tragic condition - and once life-threatening infection - that in this particular case leaves a bright young man and talented live-stock hand all but blind. Yet Dinny adapts, he changes, he grows and he thrives: as if the pipes become him as he becomes the music they breath.

Soon, Dinny and his pipes play everywhere: weddings, funerals, Big Houses, kitchen ceilí, corner dances, recitals, competitions and

even celebrity-infused return visits to major concert halls in Dublin, Edinburgh and London.

But life is not all roses for the blind piper (and all roses come with thorns) so even as Dinny is acknowledged as one of the nation’s most famous and highly respected musicians in his epoch, and even though he is one of the first-and-finest Uilleann Pipers ever to be recorded on the 1912-cutting-edge-technology-of-the-day: the wax cylinder, it is the power of one of those same immense tunes that Dinny is renowned for in performance; and one of the very tunes he has already blistered to wax for posterity - ‘Repeal of the Union’ - that got him arrested when he played it at a rally outside Mountbellew Police Station in the wake of the Easter Rising of 1916.

After Dinny’s pipes were damaged - during the aforementioned arrest - a nation-wide subscription was taken up to help pay to get the famous instrument repaired and that (lovingly-over-subscribed!) community endeavour quickly raises more than five times the sum necessary for the work and materials required. After the pipe-maker was carefully paid, the balance was promptly awarded to Dinny himself as a mark of the respect and esteem with which he is held within the nation.

“The point of our festival over the coming years,” says Casey, “and for at least one weekend a year, every year, is to seed and inspire the town and community with the story of Dinny Delaney; the man, the myth, the legend, the music. And that story of our festival begins with our local schools and our audience and musicians of tomorrow.”

“Not to worry,” says Frank, “This too will pass and we’ll be back before you even knew you missed us!”

• The Dinny Delaney Festival of Uilleann Pipers shall return.
www.dinnydelaney.com

The Festival acknowledges the support of Ballinasloe Credit Union and Galway County Council Arts Fund.



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MUSICAL SOCIETY'S "FIDDLER" POSTPONED



Full Cast

From humble beginnings the Musical Society has grown into a diverse, award winning organisation, welcoming cast members from the local area and surrounding towns and societies.

Former society member and musical director, Eimear Noone, from Kilconnell, was chosen to conduct the orchestra at the Oscars in Los Angeles - the first female in the history of the Awards Ceremony to do so.

Since its formation in 1923, the society has always endeavored to produce quality shows and the much loved tale of "Fiddler on the Roof" was to return to the Town Hall Theatre after a gap of 39 years.

Fiddler (as it is affectionately known) is set among the Jewish community in the Russian town of Anatevka, early in the twentieth century with the Tsarist Pogroms as a backdrop.

Pat McGovern, lifelong member and backstage stalwart passed away in late January, played the role of Mordcha, the Innkeeper in 1981. Pat had been involved with the Society since the 1970s, having first shared his talents on stage and later finding his niche backstage as a set builder of extraordinary talent.

They decided to continue on with the show in Pat's honour. A fantastic team of backstage workers came together and work began on a beautiful set that they hope would make Pat proud.

However, they have been left with no choice but to postpone the show until further notice due to Covid-19 virus.

In 1981, they staged the show in the then Aisling Theatre for seven nights. A stellar cast was led by Austin Gaffney as Tevye, Maureen Donoghue (Current Hon Life Member of Society) as Golde his wife, their daughters were Tzeitel - Mary Matthews, Hodel - Christine O'Dowd, Chava - Francis Kelly, Sprintze - Moira Hynes, Bielke - Bernadette Finn, Yente The Matchmaker - Mary Fahy, Motel The Tailor - Gerry Bruen, Perchik The Student - Thomas Ryan, Lazar Wolf The Butcher - Ancel O'Carroll, Innkeeper - Pat McGovern, Rabbi - Paul Henson, Mendel His Son - Jim Kent, Avram The Bookseller - Gerry Hall, Nacham The Beggar - Gerard Sweeney, Grandma Tzeitel - Norah Smyth, Fruma Sara - Verona Parker, Constable - Des Devine, Fyedka - Peter Hill, Shandal Motel's Mother - Jacqueline Guider and Fiddler - Enda Lohan.



Jacinta Riddell, Séamus Feerick, Frances Leahy



Jade Curley, Alana Mulry, Grace Byrne

Villagers: Lena Hearn, Mairead McGann, Mary Guinan, Ann McDonnell, Una Bracken, Gerry Coyne, Matthew McNally, Ollie O'Neill, Tom Finn, P.J. Guinnessy, Dick McHugh, Fionnuala Earley, Noleen Manning, Dominic Divilly.

Stage Crew: P.J. Guinnessy, O. O'Neill, T. Finn, J. Smith, N. Gannon, M. McNally, C. Henson, M. Darcy, M. McDonnell, J. McDonnell J. McDonagh, O. Gannon.

Musical Director: Kay Purcell, Asst. Musical Director: Marie Power, Guest Conductor, Production Assistant: Enda Lohan, Stage Manager: Keelan McKeon, Lighting Technician: Brendan Tully, Props: Mary Fahy,

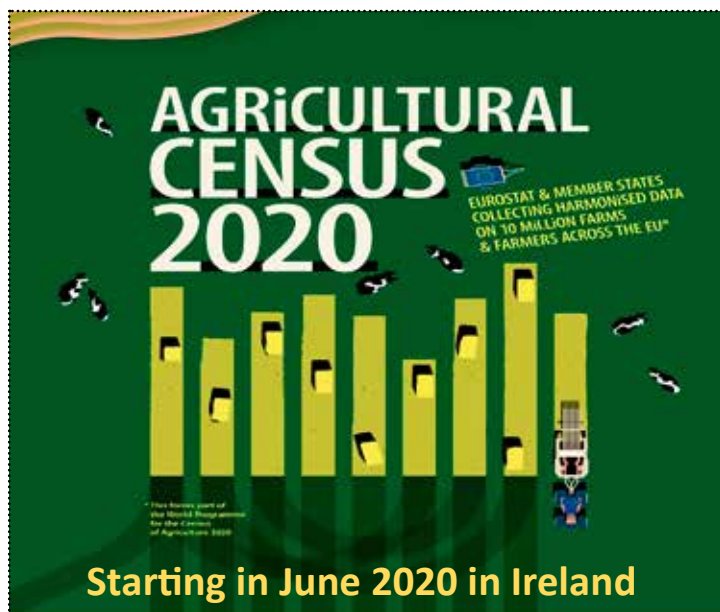
This Year's Production Team of Paul Norton - Director, Aoife McClafferty - Choreographer and Shane Farrell - Musical Director and cast was announced with Seamus Feerick as Tevye, Roisin Jackman Delaney as Golde, Emma Grealy as Tzeitel, Ailbhe Lohan as Hodel, Jessica Madden as Chava, Rachel Walker as Yente, Enda McGrath as Motel, Ciaran Smyth as Perchik, Cian O'Ceallaigh as Fyedka and Mike O'Reilly as Lazar Wolf.



Brendan Rice, Eric Lunage, Daniel O'Leary, Joshua Sweeney

See their facebook page for new dates or to make contact.

BY LIAM COSGROVE



Europe Direct Information Centre, Ballinasloe Library

Web: www.europedirect.ie/ballinasloe

Email: ballinasloe@galwaylibrary.ie

Phone: (091) 509551



SARSFIELDS CAMOGIE ALL-IRELAND SUCCESS



The parish of New Inn-Bullaun-Woodlawn is still celebrating the success of their Camogie Senior team which won their first ever All-Ireland title, following in the footsteps of their illustrious Senior Hurlers who captured All-Ireland club titles in 1993 and 1994-an achievement never before done by any club in the country.

Sarsfields GAA Club was founded in 1966 and went on to win seven Galway senior hurling championships as well as capturing All-Ireland senior hurling club titles in 1993 and 1994. The Cooney brothers comprised nearly half the team while the McGraths and Kennys were also stars of the historic double.

In 1980 the club decided to form a camogie team and eventually became a senior side in 2010, winning their first county title in 2016. Many of the household names associated with the senior hurlers also featured in the camogie teams, none more so that Michael "Hopper" McGrath who became the team manager of a side that

included his four daughters Niamh (captain), Clodagh, Orla and Siobhain. The back-up team included Kevin Ward, John Noone and Olive Costello, while Gallaghers of Ballyfa became willing sponsors.

There were many close encounters before Sarsfields' big day in Croke Park where they captured the All-Ireland title against hot favourites Slaughtneill. This was a very historic day for the East Galway Club as they became the first GAA club in Ireland to win Senior Hurling Club titles and Senior Camogie Club titles. Michael "Hopper" McGrath was the proudest man in Ireland that day, being manager of the Camogie team, seeing his four daughters win All-Ireland medals, just as he had done in the 90's as a member of the Sarsfields' senior hurling club team.

Bonfires blazed as the triumphant girls returned home with hundreds turning out to greet the girls in green and join in the night long festivities in Gallaghers.

BY KEN KELLY



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Desmond Harney along with the Vintage Club came up with an idea to set up a rally for three local Rossie boys Archie, Isaac and George. Desmond worked with their mother Paula Naughton at the East Galway Psychiatric Services.

He heard about the three Roscommon Town boys and wanted to set up an event for them. He also knew the boys had an interest in cars and machinery. He approached his colleagues in the Ballinasloe Vintage Club and they agreed to hold their track day which the boys got to join in.

The three lads are Archie, Isaac and George Naughton - all siblings with Isaac and George being identical twins, they all suffer from the same terminal disease called Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) is a genetic disorder characterised by progressive muscle degeneration and weakness due to the alterations of a protein called dystrophin that helps keep muscle cells intact.

They were all very sick when they were younger and had many illnesses before being diagnosed. There is currently no treatment or cure for this disease as of yet.

The Vintage Club typically holds two or three track days a year. They're held at Pallas Karting in Tynagh and vintage cars of over 20 years take part. They do up to three laps in their cars and are able to showcase them.

Three experienced drivers Niall Keane, Seamus Power and Francis Rafferty took the boys in their cars and brought them for a spin around the track. The boys had a great time and they were recorded by a GoPro so they could re-watch their exhilarating trip.

Their parents Pdraig and Paula, set up a trust 'Join Our Boys' in 2014 to raise awareness about the disease. They have a website which helps other families in the same situation. It encourages research and keeps



In front Archie Naughton second row, with dark glasses Pat Glynn, Des Harney, on bonnet George and Isaac Naughton, Francis Rafferty, Michael O Hehir Back row on left Brendan Smyth, Niall Keane James Power. Hidden AJ Poland. Absent from photo.. Ronnie Cobban, Ivan Mullen, Tommy Mullen, Christy Ward Mike Glynn, Shane Burns

readers updated on the latest news and events.

The eldest, Archie has completed three Dublin City Marathons as an assisted runner with his #TeamArchie colleagues and wishes to complete even more. After the event in Pallas he now wants to be a professional rally driver.

All events and activities for the club have been postponed due to the coronavirus, for more information contact their Facebook page.



Archie Naughton



Isaac Naughton

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FOUR SELECTED FOR CONNACHT UNDER 17 SQUAD

Ballinasloe had an unprecedented number of underage developing talents selected for the Connacht Under 17 team this spring and they were due to play their first international challenge against the USA Squad during the Paddy's Weekend in the Big Apple.

Four local emerging rugby stars Luke Walsh, Daithi Blackweir, John Devine and Adam Carroll had been selected to represent their province Under 17 team in a game in the United States. They were meant to go see an NBA basketball game, march in the New York parade along with a few more activities.

John Devine, centre and recent try scorer for Garbally College in their Connacht Cup final win, began playing rugby from an early age with the local club. He claims "I was forced to" while always wearing a grin on his face. The Under 17 rugby squad in the town is coached by his father Mike Devine.

He had been asked to a trial for the Connacht team because of some of his outstanding play for both club and school and found elements of the trial easy which ensured he was picked for the squad.

Adam Carroll, star full back for the school and club team, recognised Leinster and Ireland rugby talent Gary Ringrose as his favourite player to watch. As a result, he has tried to model a lot of his game after him. "He's fast and has a similar play style to me".

As it was going to be his first time to the US, he was most looking forward to the NBA game between the New York Knicks and the Charlotte Hornets. He enjoys rugby with large respect to the play style implemented at both Garbally and the club. "It's fun, we try to get the ball out wide and score tries", he states.

Daithi Blackweir, number 8 for both sides, began playing rugby at the age of eight. He admires Munster and Ireland leader CJ Stander due to his commitment to the game and his physicality, which is one of Daithi's favourite aspects of the game. He too was looking



L-R: Daithi Blackweir, Luke Walsh, Adam Carroll, John Devine

forward to his first match in the States, he was relishing the chance to put up a good performance against tough competition.

Luke Walsh, a flanker who throughout his young career has slowly but surely moved from the front row to the back row. When he was younger, he idolised Munster captain Peter O'Mahony for his toughness and willingness to never give up. He had been to Boston and New York already and was looking forward to returning there again.

They were all disappointed with the cancellation of their trip due to the recent outbreak.

All events and activities at the club have been postponed. The Provincial Game too is gone into sleep mode. At the time of writing it's not really understood what can be salvaged with the remaining calendar months for both the domestic and underage game.

To keep up to date with all the rugby club's activities or if you wish to join the rugby club, message their Facebook page Ballinasloe Rugby Club.

BY LIAM COSGROVE



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ARD SCOIL MUIRE WOMEN'S RUGBY

BY LIAM COSGROVE

The Ard Scoil Mhuire Junior and Senior teams qualified for the National Women's Rugby Finals in the Aviva Stadium having had their teams taking part in the seven-a-side Connacht Cup qualifier held at the Creggs RFC Grounds.

Up to 14 schools entered 21 teams across both levels, with four of them going onto the National sevens later this year, two from each respective division.

The tournament was set up into two groups for both competitions. The Juniors, led by Maeve Darcy, were mostly made up of the younger Under 14/16 club rugby players while the Senior team, captained by Nuala Duignan, was made up of the older club players. Both Ard Scoil teams won their group outright which meant they went onto the semi-final and with two great performances from both sides, they reached the final.

They gave great displays in their own respective games. The Seniors



JUNIOR TEAM (Some of the players) Back row: Niamh Kerr, Aoife Burnell, Alida, Ruth Manning, Niamh Keighery, Ciara Lohan, Lauren Ruane, Hannah Russell. Front row: Shauna Mitchell, Mia Costello, Aoife Keighery, Emma Mitchell, Sinead Kelly, Emma Keane. Captain Junior: Eimear Hynes

came out with a great win over Westport by 25-10 to become the outright winner of the qualifiers. The Juniors lost the final to Claremorris in extra time on the golden try rule. Both teams as a result, qualified for the national finals in the Aviva Stadium.

The four teams that qualified were Claremorris & Ard Scoil Mhuire (Juniors), and Sacred Heart Westport & Ard Scoil Mhuire (Seniors).

The national finals were meant to be held on April 1, which has then been postponed to April 29 due to the coronavirus outbreak. With the new restrictions on sporting activities and schools remaining closed, the finals are still up in the air.

All Connacht Rugby club and school fixtures are postponed at this time. Connacht Rugby staff and the relevant committees will meet in due course to determine the next steps for competitions once games are permitted to continue.

If you interested in joining women's rugby in the town, you can contact the Ballinasloe Rugby Facebook page.



SENIOR TEAM - Back row left to right: Emma Keane, Avril Deely, Sarah Lyons, Mia Costello, Niamh Kelly, Joanne Curley, Aoife Murray, Orla Madden. Front row Left to Right: Aoife Keighery, Leah Hogarty, Emma Mitchell, Clodagh Powell, Rachel Larkin (captain), Roisín Fahy

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BALLINASLOE SOCCER SNIPPETS

BY LIAM COSGROVE

The final Lotto jackpot was won by senior team and youth coach John Conway with a prize of €5,900. Under a year ago in one of the biggest wins in its history, the previous club jackpot of €16,000 was won by Marty Creaven.

The club switched to the 50/50 weekly draw as it proves even more attractive to the general public, where having a definite winner each week who would win 50% of that week's sales with the club retaining the other 50% to improve facilities and equipment for the players.

The first winner of the new weekly 50/50 draw was Patrick Murray who received €327.50. After only a couple of weeks, the new 50/50 draw seems to be really catching on. The draw each week is also broadcasted live on the Ballinasloe Town FC Facebook page.

Before the sporting clamp down - local lads Ryan Burke, Jordan Carr and Joshua Gaynor featured prominently for Galway Technical Institute this season and played a starring role in the Rustlers C.U.F.L. Division 2 League Final versus the National College of Ireland. However, on the day, they were beaten by a strong NCI side on a final score line of three goals to nil. They gave a very good account of themselves and both Ryan Burke and Jordan Carr went very close

to scoring only to be denied by the post on both occasions.

Former youth star Heather Payne, who honed her skills at the local Under 10 Street League, is now very much an established member of the Irish Senior Ladies Squad who are currently unbeaten in the Euro 2022 Qualifiers. The Florida State star, has made herself a household name for the senior team at the young age of 20.

The Irish squad are currently top of their group with 3 games remaining and have secured 13 points from 4 wins and a draw. In the latest game versus Montenegro, Ireland secured a three goals to nil win but Heather had to pull out of this game with a hamstring injury. Heather can now take her time to recover as the Women's Euro Finals have been postponed to 2022 to facilitate the rescheduling of the men's tournament due to the coronavirus outbreak.

To get in contact with the soccer club, you can contact them on their Facebook page Ballinasloe Town FC. In line with Government Protocols and advices all Club activity is suspended.



Heather Payne representing Ireland in the recent qualifiers.



Senior team player and youth coach John Conway on his match 4 Jackpot win of €5,900 (left to right) Joby Kelly club chairman, John Conway Jackpot winner, Wayne Braithwaite club secretary, and Mickey Walshe committee member



Pictured with the GTI in the Rustlers CUFL Division 2 League Final were Ballinasloe Town AFC senior players Ryan Burke, Jordan Carr and Joshua Gaynor.



First winner of the 50/50 draw (L/R) Mark Duffy (BTAFC senior team player), Patrick Murray (50/50 winner), Noel Lyons (BTAFC senior team coach).

TENNIS INTRODUCE PICKLEBALL

BY LIAM COSGROVE



L-R Elaine Couper, Rachel Staunton, Vincent Hall, Garry Zancanaro, Ed Galvin, Andrew Bannerton

The Tennis Club is currently working on building two new Tennis Courts in time for the summer season. This will be funded by a recently awarded sports capital grant and the club's fundraising efforts, with a further grant to be applied for to complete a third court as soon as possible.

The club has been holding sessions of Pickleball which is perfect for people between the ages of 8-80. Pickleball is the fastest growing racquet sport in the world. It was created in the US by three Dad's trying to keep their kids from getting bored.

Basically it is table tennis played on a badminton court using a tennis net. It uses wooden bats similar to table tennis bats, a lower tennis net and plastic perforated ball slower and a bit bigger than a tennis ball. It's easy for beginners to start playing, as it has the simplicity of table tennis, but less of the complexity of tennis or badminton.

Pickleball is perfect for Ireland's wet and windy weather as it can use any existing community hall. The court itself is just 22 foot by 44 foot, so it can be played in any parish hall and really is a sport for anyone of any age, in fact amongst regular players are some of the town's finest tag rugby stars, as well as several retired people.

Sessions were normally held in the Emerald Ballroom every week; all pickleball and tennis club activities have been postponed. For further Pickleball information, call Ed 086 819 6321 or check out their Facebook page.

UNDERAGE MEDAL CEREMONY

BY LIAM COSGROVE

Underage teams from the Padraig Pearces club were presented with their medals for their successes throughout last year. The medal ceremony was held in the clubhouse. Senior players, along with senior football manager Pat Flanagan, took time out of their day to present the medals to the youngsters before their training session.

Medals were presented to both the boys and girls sides on the day.



Minor Div 2 League Winners.

Back row: L-R Jason Cunningham, Eoin Collieran, Liam Creavin, Kyle Blackweir, Pádraig Galvin, James Costello, PJ Kenny (Sponsor). Middle Row: Calum Keogh, Luke Walsh, Declan Kenny, Aaron Burke, Richard Browne, Thomas Carey, Jack Downey, Pat Flanagan (Senior Manager). Front Row: Gerry Kelly, Andrew Naughton, Conor Lohan, Jack Tumulty, John Moore, Eoin McManus, Terry McGowan, Daniel Farrell. Missing from photo: Luke Corbett, Connell Moore, Keelan Galvin, Luke Feehily.



U14, Division 1 Championship Winners 2019.

Back Row: I to r: Conor Payne (Senior Player), Katie Mulry, Marianne Monaghan, Ciaran McGreal, Katie Curley, Katie Murray, Jim Downey, Clodagh Grehan, Denis Monaghan, Kate Moore, Aidan Ryan, Pat Flanagan. Middle Row: I to r: Ava Mulry, Charlotte Blackweir, Amelia Halpin, Lisa Dolan, Hannah Kelly, Alana Ryan, Amy Costelloe, Hannah Farrell, Mia Walsh, Ann Marie Costelloe. Front Row: I to r: Paul Costelloe, Chloe Costelloe, Lorna Cruise, Jennifer Downey, Emma McGreal, Aiveen Curley, Clodagh Grehan, Arlene Cunningham, Jessica O'Brien. Missing from Photo: Ann Lohan, Ciaran Lohan, Bláithnaid Kelly, Ella Greene, Sarah Killeen.



U16 Boys Div 1 Championship Winners 2019.

Front Row (L-R): Andrew Naughton, Ciaran McGreal, Aidan Collieran, PJ Kenny (Sponsor), Eoin Collieran, Pat Flanagan (Senior Football Manager), Liam Feehily, Hubert Darcy. 2nd Row (L-R): Cian Grenham, Jack Ryan, Ryan Kelly, Cathal Carty, Adam McGreal, David Hoey, Cormac Curley, Colm Sheerin, Luke Galvin, Luke Feehily. 3rd Row (L-R): Frank Canning, Shane Glennon, Shane Costelloe, Sean Canning, Conor Costelloe, Luke Walsh, Declan Kenny, Aaron Burke, Ciaran Curley, Conor Ryan. Back Row (L-R): Niall Carty (Senior Football Player), Fionnan Darcy, James Mooney, Jack Tumulty, Conor Harley, Terry McGowan, Daithi Blackweir, Cailum Keogh, Abdullah Shahid. Missing from photo: Adam Hynes, Jack Nevin.



U14 Div 4 Championship Shield Winners 2019.

Back Row: I to r: Eoin Canning, Barry McGowan, Darragh Collieran, Fionnain Seale, Cillian Blackweir, Pat Flanagan (Senior Football Manager), Ronan Sheerin, Emmet Kelly (Senior Football Player). Middle Row: I to r: Frank Canning (Manager), Cormac Moore, Luke Earls, Joe Lennon, Jack Flynn, Jack Johnson, Hugh Curley, Darragh O Sullivan. Front Row: I to r: Keelan Kelly, Padraig Lennon, Conor Flynn, Adam Doran, Ben Dolan (Captain), Conor Kelly, David Carroll, Aaron Hogan. Missing from photo: Cathal O'Brien, Ross Glynn, Dylan Ryan.



U16 Girls Division 3 Winners.

Back row L-R Anne Kelly, Rossa Monaghan, Aoife Keogh, Aliyah Ryan, Charlotte Blackweir, Ciara Keogh, Shane Mulvey. Front Row: Rebecca Cruise, Jane Creavin, Amelia Halpin, Aoife Cruise, Arlene Cunningham, Emma McGreal and Pat Flanagan. Missing from photo: Ciara Lohan, Jo Ann Curley, Eimear Hynes, Leah Hogarty, Clodagh Powell, Shauna Hibbit, Jessica Greene, Ciara Ward, Bláithnaid Kelly, Shauna Bergin, Nicola Curley, Jim Keogh and Brendan Powell (Management team).



U12 Division 5 Summer League Winners 2019.

Row: Andrew Naughton Paul Whelan, Pat Flanagan, Denis Monaghan. Middle Row: Adam Kenny, Oisín Kelly, Daniel Cruise, Euan Kelly, Niall Doran, Gavin Kelly, David Downey, Keelan Doran. Front Row: Enda Browne, Senan Naughton, Ned Hogarty, Leon Morgan, Joey O'Byrne, Louis Greene, Conor Flynn. Missing from photo: Billy Lynch, Lee Connaughton, Donnacha Monaghan, Fionn O'Brien, John Price.

GARBALLY SENIORS SECURE THREE IN A ROW

BY LIAM COSGROVE

Cian Treacy, was the out half and captain of the Garbally Seniors' Connacht Cup winning side that overcame Sligo Grammar, in a historic three in a row victory for the Blue and White Army.

Led by coaches Kevin Tierney and Mike Devine and Manager Gerry Kelly, they won on a tightly contested game on a close score line of 14-12.

"It was a tough game. We knew it was going to be tough, as we played them twice and lost both times. We knew they'd give us a run for our money. We played a good first half keeping it in their part of the field and then the second half came and we were defending for much of the half but we managed to hold it out in the end with every player giving a great performance" stated Cian.

Kilconnell based Cian started playing rugby with the local club at the age of seven. He was a sporty kid and wanted to play rugby along with football for Gabriel's GAA Club and soccer at the Town FC. He models his game after Scotland and Racing 92 star out half Finn Russell. He admires many of his attributes that he has also included them into his own game. "His skill and coolness on the ball, he makes the game look easy" said the Garbally No. 10.

Cian has a decorated rugby career up to date. He has won cups and trophies at most age groups from U13, U14 and a league and cup double at U15. He was also a part of the rugby club that won both league and cup and made an All-Ireland semi-final appearance as well as being a part of the historic three-in-a-row Garbally side.

As a Leaving Cert student and leader, he was nominated as captain for the year. "I'm a person of few words and try my best to do the most I can on the pitch. I do my best to lead by example on and off the pitch" he said modestly.

Music is an important part of their preparation for each game. Seamus Egan would be on music duties before the game to help the lads relax and focus on the job at hand. One of the most memorable moments of the season was John Claffey who gave them great entertainment with a big dance after their historic win before they all slid into a nearby puddle!



NEW MEMBERS JOIN CYCLING CLUB

BY LIAM COSGROVE



Seamus Kelly Club Chairman
Presenting to Therapeutic
Learning Centre

On the racing scene, the Cycling Club had success at the under 16 level with Shane Dolan finishing 4th overall and 1st in the under 15 level on the third stage of the Youth Ras Maigh Eo 2020.

Over the last two months, the club also held a sign-up night where 10 new members were enlisted and organised a First Aid course in the Cancer Support Center in

Brackernagh, where 12 members got their first aid qualifications.

In the last month, they have had a ladies only Turbo Training night and a donation of €220 collected from club members at their annual Christmas Spin last December was gifted to the Therapeutic Learning Centre.

Cycling Ireland has advised members of the cycling community that the postponement of all cycling events and activities is to be extended. Government advice allows for cycling in the following instances, all while adhering to social distancing guidelines. Exercising outdoors (solo or with members of your household), Shopping for basic necessities, Providing care or helping somebody

vulnerable, Travelling to/from essential work and indoor training. The annual Charity Cycle "Tour deShams" event, in its fifth year has been sadly cancelled also.

Due to recent announcements, the club have set out a few routes that members can follow. They're short cycles for beginners and longer cycles for more experienced cyclists. The ranges of distances can range from a 5km to 135km cycle.

They are intended to help members to keep up the fitness and stamina that they've built up over the first few months of the year. All routes start and finish at Barry's Cycles. Routes have a varying difficulty and they're routes available for all members.

Some of the shorter routes include a tour of the town passing the train station and out and around the old Dublin Road. The 25km spin takes you through Aughrim and Ballinure while the 35km spin takes you past Aughrim and Ballybogan. A full list will be posted on the magazine's Facebook page.

For more information, contact Ballinasloe Cycling Club on Facebook.



Shane Dolan - Chammprion
Underage Cyclist

GOLF CLUB MEMBERS SECURE CONNACHT JUNIOR CUP

Garbally College Golf Team (made up of Ballinasloe Golf Club golfers) have won the Connacht Junior Cup and are representing Connacht in the All-Ireland Irish Schools Junior Cup Finals when the competition is rescheduled. .



(Left to right) Ava Grenham, Zuzanna Krozos & Aisling Blaine

The local Golf Club is one of the Connacht's oldest golf clubs, and in order to attract more members, the club have put in place a number of initiatives to support Junior and Beginner golfers in 2020.

Students from Creagh National School had been taking part in a 6-week SNAG golf programme with Philip Murphy from the Murphy Sweeney Golf School. SNAG Golf (Starting New at Golf) is a programme designed to teach people of all ages and ability levels the fundamentals of golf through this fun and informative programme.

For any other schools who are interested, contact Junior Convenors Rita Moore or Mark Conneely via the golf club (090 96 42126) or Philip Murphy from Murphy Sweeney Golf School. You can also message their Facebook page for more information.

Once the Juniors are used to playing on the course, there are plenty of opportunities for them to play in daily/weekly competitions over the summer months, helping them improve their skills. Advanced Juniors will also have the opportunity to travel to other clubs and play in inter-club competitions.

There is a golf junior whatsapp group that caters for all juniors and if you want to be added to it please ring the golf club on 09096 42126 or message us privately to Ballinasloe Golf Club on Facebook.

Golf is a non-contact sport which fuels motivation, decision making, honesty and self-confidence while making lifelong friends and having lots of fun along the way and is suitable for all ages.

Golf has famously been referred to as a "a good walk spoiled", but evidence suggests the walk – spoiled or otherwise – is good for both your physical and mental well-being.

The Events Committee of the golf club had a busy schedule of golf organised for April / May but this has been shelved until HSE and Govt. advice changes.

To keep up to date with the golf club, check their Facebook page.



(L-R) Eiman Kashif, Kalum Manning, Danny Mulcahy and Igor Bykowski.

BY LIAM COSGROVE



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LOCAL ATHLETES CLUB SUCCESSES

BY LIAM COSGROVE

The Ballinasloe and District Athletics Club have had a great start to the year with a number of members competing in the Galway Indoor Competitions and the Connacht Indoor Competition in AIT. These competitions provided some of the new athletes with the opportunity to compete for the first time at county and regional level.

Luke Manning won bronze in the U15 boys 60 meters sprint while Cillian O Tuairisg secured a silver medal in the boys U13 Shot Putt. Veronica Burke also received a silver medal in the three kilometer walk in the National Senior Indoor Championships earlier this month. Martin Keane earned a silver medal in Weight For Distance event in The National Indoor Championships in AIT where he also came 4th in the Shot Putt.

Athletes should be encouraged by these results to continue to put themselves forward for competitions which gives them a goal to

work towards and also allows them to measure and celebrate their success.

The next outing on the calendar is the Galway Track & Field event (when allowed) at Dangan where there are a number of competitions, both team and individual, running throughout the weekend to suit all ages and abilities.

Group Coaching has been discontinued till possible.

If you would like further information, please contact them through their Facebook page Ballinasloe Athletic Club.



Martin Keane receiving silver medal in Weight For Distance in The National Indoor Championships in AIT. Martin also came 4th in the Shot Putt.



Veronica Burke who won silver in 3,000 mts Walk in The National Senior Indoor Championships



Ballinasloe & District Athletics Club boys u12 Relay Team competing in the Connacht Indoor competition at Athlone IT last weekend. L-R Luke Bookless, Adam Murray, Callum Mooney, Jake Hobbs.



Ballinasloe & District Athletes competing in the Connacht Indoor competition at Athlone IT last Sunday. L-R Eva Ruane, Caoimhe Kilkenny, Luke Manning and Jamie Fernandez.

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GAA CLUB PLAN STALLED POST-COVID

BY LIAM COSGROVE

During these uncertain times, the Covid-19 virus has reeked heartbreak and anguish with many. The term "the emergency" is now being used to describe the impact economically and socially that this virus is having, a term which has not been used in Ireland since World War II.

All GAA activity has been suspended for the foreseeable future to adhere to the HSE guidelines regarding social distancing and to staying indoors.

The last meeting of any committee of Ballinasloe GAA was an Executive Meeting to discuss items arising from the Games & Coaching Development Workshop. There was a strong turn-out at the workshop and there were some very positive discussions about all aspects of coaching, player welfare, respect between coaches, parents and players and also player retention.

Feedback from the workshop was collated and brought before the Club Executive where the responses were broken down, discussed and is to be summarised into a document to be brought before the club. Unfortunately, as a result of Covid-19, they will not be able to bring that document to the club until we are in a position to resume normal club activities.

For people at home looking to keep kids as active as possible during this time, there are a number of resources available on the LGFA Facebook Page and also on the GAA Websites. They offer easy training drills, with the only requirements being a football and a wall. If there are two or three children in the same house, these drills can be done between them.

If you know somebody who has no means of getting medication, fuel or groceries delivered to them, please get in touch with us through our Facebook page or through any Ballinasloe GAA club member. We will do what we can to help.

Our Club Lotto is only available on-line and as it now the club's only source of income we ask that you support it every week at www.ballinasloe.gaa.ie. The GAA Bingo has been suspended as have all other activities that are a social lifeline to so many people.



Some of the squad who braved the arctic conditions for training as part of the John Mitchel trained Gaelic For Mothers and Others during the frosty nights of February



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150 IN THE ROAD RUNNERS 5K EVENT

BY LIAM COSGROVE

Over 150 people took to the roads to take part in a five-kilometer run as part of the local Road Runners' couch to 5km programme. For most, this was their first time to run this distance and it was the culmination of a six-week training, hosted for free by the local running club.

Starting at the end of January with over 200 people on the opening night, the club held sessions three times a week on the Dunlo Running Track. Here the club members volunteered their time to guide the novices from walking to running short distances and gradually building it up, session by session, to reach their five-kilometer goal.

Now in its 6th year, the programme has proven very popular with everyone who takes part and local man, Tom Ward, who has completed it for a second time, had a few words about the run.

"Over the past two years I have been a participant in the Couch to 5km, which is organised by the Ballinasloe Road Runners during the dull and dreary days of January and February. I find apart from the benefits I have gained from the mental and physical aspects of it, the social element cannot be ignored" stated Tom.

"During each training session, a palpable buzz was felt around the track. Everyone was enthusiastic and a little apprehensive in anticipation of what the session would entail but it would always turn out to be totally enjoyable and immensely satisfying, even in blizzard conditions! All of

this is attributed to the dedication, commitment and professionalism of the road runners, who successfully combined their unique skills to guide and motivate us over the six week programme, which culminated in all participants successfully achieving their goal on the final day" explained Tom.

The next challenge they now face is continuing to practice what they have achieved, so their running journey continues and their goals will hopefully increase'

The Ballinasloe Road Runners always welcome new runners and meet on Tuesday and Thursday nights at 7.30pm outside the Dunlo Running track post COVID restrictions. You can also find out more information on their Facebook page - Ballinasloe (& District) Road Runners.



L-R Front row: Beatrice Newton, Mairin Mannion, Joan Madden, Brid Donnellan. Back row: Siobhan Smith, Anne Sinclair, Tom Ward, Mary Ward, Geraldine Lyons, Damian McLaverty, Joanne Trappe



L-R: Vicky Costello, Caroline Harney, Attracta Foley and Sheila Gavin.

This was the Caroline & Attracta's first 5km and they used the event to fundraising for the East Cancer and Midlands Cancer Support Centre.



L-R Noel Gavin, Margaret Connaughton, Martina Keighery, Clare Madden and Derick O'Brien from Ballinasloe Road Runners lead out the crowd at the start of the 5km run.



BRR members lead a warm up before the start of the Couch to 5km

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RIDING CLUB SECRETARY SERVES AS INTERNATIONAL STEWARD



Riding Club Members. Left to Right: Jacqueline Maudlin, Mike Dolan, Jane Conway, Tina Sinclair-Daly, Fiona Donohue and Yvonne Bradley.

Mount Talbot resident - Charles Maudlin, secretary of the Ballinasloe Riding Club living will again be representing the club as an International Steward at his 3rd Olympics next summer in Tokyo 2021 and it'll be his second as the stable manager responsible for up to 200 horses.

Throughout his career as an International Steward, he has travelled the world. He has been to Russia, Qatar, UAE, China, Hong Kong, USA, Brazil, Indonesia and most European countries on his travels.

Working as a Compliance Manager in the local Arrabawn Dairies, he arrived in Ireland five years after the founding of the Ballinasloe riding club. He was previously involved with the Slieve Aughty Club based in Gort.

He has had an interest in horse riding for most of his life. He began riding at 7 years of age and rode through until he was about 50. As a rider, he won the Open Team Chase at the Grafton Hunt in 1994.

3 years ago, there was a change in the committee within the Ballinasloe Club and he was asked to become the Secretary after



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years of competing and officiating in the club. "The Showgrounds are a fantastic facility and are very popular with riders of all abilities from all surrounding counties. I used to commentate at the annual show and exciting Hunt Chase, watching crowds of 6 or 7 deep enjoy the thrills and spills years ago."

15 years ago, he was asked to form a Stewarding Team at the Dublin Horse Show, as there was a need for more control in the National classes. From there, National Stewarding in Ireland was resurrected and after gaining more experience over several years, he applied to become a FEI Steward.

"As a Chief Steward, the real work starts as soon as the schedule is published, drawing up the Stewards rotas, training timetables etc. It is so important to manage each team well and utilize their strengths. A good Chief Steward must see problems before they become issues and prevent incidents by being proactive, watching everything and being everywhere on the showgrounds".

He was to be Chief Steward at the Royal Windsor Horse Show in May, Stable Manager for the Olympics and Paralympics in the Summer of next year and Chief Steward at the Team Finals in Barcelona hopefully in October.

The riding club recently got its 2020 activities underway in its traditional home of the showgrounds. As one of the oldest riding clubs in the country, it provides an opportunity for local riders of all standards to get together and enjoy the common thread of horse related activities.

Some of the members met up in the showgrounds at the beginning of February where they all had an opportunity to put



themselves and their horses through various training exercises on the flat and over some show jumps.

As part of the Western Region of the Association of Irish Riding Clubs, which has in excess of 120 Clubs nationwide and well over 25 various Riding Clubs throughout Connaught, the Club is looking forward to being represented in 2 National Championships which will be held nearby this year.

Flowerhill Equestrian Centre will see the National Hunter Trial Championships return to their traditional home near Portumna and the National Eventing Championships in August.

In the meantime, members are advised to follow Govt. Guidelines and a new schedule will emerge post COVID regulations.

New members are always welcome and further information can be had the Club Secretary, Charles Maudlin (0876468162).



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MANNION'S WONDER TRY RECALLED

BY KEN KELLY

Just over thirty one years ago, Ballinasloe's Noel Mannion made international headlines when he scored a spectacular try playing for Ireland in their game against Wales in the Cardiff Arms Park. The huge Irish lock forward intercepted a Wales pass, close to his own line and ran the length of the field to score a spectacular Irish try.



Mannion's achievement was recalled in Ireland's opening Women's International against Scotland when Ballinasloe's 18-year-old Beibhinn Parsons performed a similar feat when wearing the No. 11 jersey. The Ardscoil Mhuire Leaving Cert student intercepted a Scotland pass on her own five yard line and ran the length of Energia Park to get the touchdown. And the gutsy winger battled through three Wales players to score Ireland's opening try in their win over the Welsh the following weekend. However, Beibhinn opted out of the subsequent three internationals to pursue her Leaving Cert studies.

Parsons, in November of 2018 was the youngest player, male or female, to make a senior debut for Ireland in rugby, coming off



the bench to play against the USA at the age of 16. She went on to captain the Ireland U18 Ireland Sevens in the World Games and also featured in the Sydney leg of the World Seven Series last year.

By a strange coincidence, the No. 11 jersey on Ireland's Under 20 side of the opening weekends was also worn by a player with Ballinasloe connections, who also scored a try in each game. Leinster's Andrew Smith from Sandymount in Dublin, whose grandmother, Marie O'Neill, hails from Ballinasloe and his mother, Clodagh was born in Portiuncula, is the grand-nephew of former Galway senior footballer



and Mayo Team Manager, Liam O'Neill. Andrew was vice-captain of the St. Michael's School team which won the Leinster senior cup last year and this year has signed on for Clontarf senior team.

For the record, we had two wingers, each wearing the No. 11 jersey, in women's and under 20 men's international rugby, both scoring tries in each of their two opening games.

However there was mixed fortune for the Irish in the game against England with Under 20's romping home victorious while the women, minus Beibhinn Parsons, being defeated. Parsons left the squad after the first two games to concentrate on her Leaving Cert but the final two internationals have been deferred until the autumn.

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BILLIARDS MAESTRO MICKEY MURRAY REMEMBERS

Over sixty years ago there were three billiard clubs in Ballinasloe, namely The Hut, The Workingmen's Club and the Social Club. There was intense rivalry between the trio, particularly when it came to inter town competitions. But they also produced outstanding cueists from an early age who later went on to be household names.

One of those was Mickey Murray from St. Michael's Place, who had the honour of being a playing member in each of the three clubs. "Billiards was all the rage back then. You would very seldom see anyone playing snooker. There were two tables in The Hut, one in the Workingmen's and two in the Social Club. From early evening to midnight they were occupied-it was hard to get a game on them.

"The Hut was built for ex-British soldiers on the Fairgreen. They played billiards, cards, darts etc. but over the years more and more of them passed away and ultimately the building was demolished. The Social Club moved to the Social Centre in the early sixties, bringing with it players from the other clubs. Membership swelled, competition got intense and inside ten years snooker had nearly taken over as the No. 1 game. In 1974, world champion Alex Higgins played a three-hour exhibition there that set place alight. Everyone then wanted to play snooker" said Mickey.



Acknowledged as one of the finest cuemen on the baize cloth, Murray never took to snooker. "I loved billiards. We had great players like Johnny Riddell, Des Madden, Paddy Griffin etc. who carried the flag in the inter-towns' competitions. We were all friends but there was great rivalry. You had to fight for your place on the team" he added.

Mickey, now in his eighties, also recalls the many friends who have passed away that were characters in the club, both on the billiard tables and in the hilarious card games of "Come Up," "Solo," "Poker," "25" etc. He himself was a willing participant in many of these never-to-be-forgotten episodes.

Murray was also a noted goalkeeper on the soccer pitch but is probably best remembered for a game played on the Fairgreen when his attempted kick-out wound up in his own net.

Always a gentlemen to his fingertips, Mickey Murray gave many sterling and unforgettable displays on the billiard table but also found time to encourage the younger generation to participate in so many sports. His artistry and class were unique.

BY KEN KELLY

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Small-the Billposter

When the soldiers returned home from World War 1 they tried their hands at various chores. According to the "Democrat" P. Small from St. Brendan's decided to establish his own "Billposting" business.

He was a daily caller to the "Democrat" Printing Works in Society Street, in search of business. As the posters came off the presses, P. canvassed prospective clients such as auctioneers, circus owners, cinemas, carnivals, sports and entertainment organisers, offering his services. This entailed the "posting of bills" at prime locations around the town such as the "Round Wall", the entrance to Duggan Park, River St. etc. for a small fee. He was succeeded by the late Jim "Skin" McGrath up to the mid 70's before the trade collapsed

The paper printed posters were replaced by the all-weather corrie-boards, which clients found longer-lasting when displayed outdoors and more attractive. Now thanks to KPW Print Management in Poolboy, these new advertising boards are available in a variety of sizes at 24 hours' notice.



BALLINASLOE WORKHOUSE



***"People came to drink the soup
Ladled from greasy bowls;
They died in whitewashed wards that
Held a thousand Irish souls."***

Some of our older readers may recall a forbidding-looking Victorian building that once stood opposite the Society Street end of the Harris (Burma) Road. It was Ballinasloe Workhouse, within whose walls so many poverty-stricken people had perished in the "dark and evil days" of the 1840s.

Prior to the 1838 Irish Poor Law Act there was no legal provision in this country for the destitute, the aged and infirm. By contrast, the situation in England and Wales since the early 17th century was that each parish was responsible for the maintenance of its own poor, and this generally took the form of outdoor relief. However, concern that the system was open to abuse led to the passing of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act providing for the establishment of workhouses to serve amalgamations of parishes. Henceforth relief would be available only in these institutions, where conditions were to be made worse than those experienced in the lowest paid employment as a conscious effort to discourage people from applying for help. In the teeth of almost unanimous Irish opposition that crossed political, class and religious lines, the British parliament introduced similar legislation to apply to Ireland in 1838, with the significant difference that here no one would have a legal right to admission to a workhouse.

Under the Act, 130 Unions were constituted to administer the

legislation, each with its workhouse and Board of Guardians. A Union was made up of a number of electoral divisions, a division comprising a collection of townlands. Two-thirds of the Guardians were elected by the ratepayers of the Union, the remainder being ex-officio members. Each workhouse would have a resident manager or Master and a female deputy known as the Matron. Tasked with designing the institutions, 25-year-old English architect George Wilkinson (portrayed in old age in our photograph) arrived in Ireland in January 1839. Ballinasloe received its first admissions three years later. In the mid-1840s a 64-bed fever hospital was built in the Workhouse grounds but separate from the main complex. Its most noteworthy patient was John O'Connor Power (1846 – 1919) who went on to become a prominent Nationalist politician and eminent parliamentary orator.

People entering the poorhouse faced a harsh regime that separated husbands from wives, and children from their parents. The diet was monotonous and nutritionally deficient, though probably not much different from what the inmates had become used to before their admission. Smoking, card-playing and alcoholic drink were prohibited. The paupers slept on straw-filled mattresses spread on plank beds ranged on both sides of a central aisle in long dormitories inadequately heated by open turf fires in winter. Elementary schooling was provided for children. Infractions of the rules were punished by deprivation of food and solitary confinement.

By the end of June 1848, with famine stalking the land, the Workhouse, which had been designed to accommodate 1,000 inmates, was sheltering over 4,000 paupers, and was distributing outdoor relief to at least another 4,000. Mortality rates were high due to the prevalence of infectious diseases such as typhus and smallpox that thrived in the overcrowded conditions. As regards the Great Famine, it is a sobering thought that if relief measures had been adequate to feed the hungry, the likely result would have been an even greater catastrophe in the future. The underlying cause of famine was rural overpopulation facilitated by the subletting of agricultural holdings and a dangerous dependence on potatoes as a source of nutrition. Unless these issues were addressed, it is difficult to see how famine could have been averted when potato blight struck again in the early 1860s and the late '70s. That starvation deaths were not widespread in those years must be largely down

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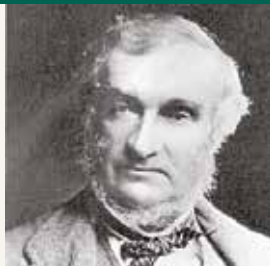


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George Wilkinson

to the fact that the rural poor, the class most affected by crop failure, had been decimated in the famine of the 1840s.

Nuns of the Mercy order had been permitted to take up employment as nurses in workhouse infirmaries since 1861. This, however, did not occur in Ballinasloe until 1863 due to the opposition of Lord Clancarty, who argued that having nuns on the staff would be inconsistent with the non-denominational character of the institution.

Notwithstanding the Earl's misgivings, the presence of the Sisters of Mercy was generally welcomed since they were replacing untrained personnel in the wards.

In June 1865 the institution was convulsed by scandal when the Master, David Breen, and the schoolmistress, Miss Duane, were arrested and charged with infanticide. It transpired that Breen, a married man, had been conducting an affair with the teacher, resulting in the latter secretly giving birth to a child. When the unfortunate infant was killed its body was thrown into the Workhouse latrine in an attempt to conceal the crime. The ultimate fate of the two accused is unknown.

Inmates of the male section of the Workhouse were transferred to Portumna on 8th October 1918 when the British Army occupied portion of the building where they remained until the following May. The military, however, agreed to allow civilians to continue to use the facilities of the infirmary which had been functioning as a general hospital serving the town and its hinterland since the 1860s. A company of Free State soldiers was billeted in the Workhouse during the Civil War, but by then it had ceased to operate as an institution, having finally closed its doors at the end of December 1921.

Thenceforth it was officially known as the County Buildings, and fulfilled a multiplicity of roles, i.e., a technical school from 1925 to '37; the headquarters of the FCA (local defence force); a band hall; a public library; a lamb slaughtering facility; a boys' club; meeting rooms for various sporting and cultural associations; a jelly factory; and stabling for horses during the annual October Fair. The fever hospital provided temporary accommodation in the early 1930s

for families evacuated from condemned housing. From 1937 to 1990 Dubarry Shoemakers' factory was located there. Afterwards it was taken over by Crazy Prices, the first of a series of supermarkets at the site.

One night in mid-December 1955, most of the Workhouse was gutted in a fire that had originated in the apartments occupied by the FCA. Onlookers at the conflagration must have had mixed feelings: grim satisfaction that a building that had witnessed so much suffering in the past was no more, tinged perhaps with sadness that a tangible link with our history had been broken.

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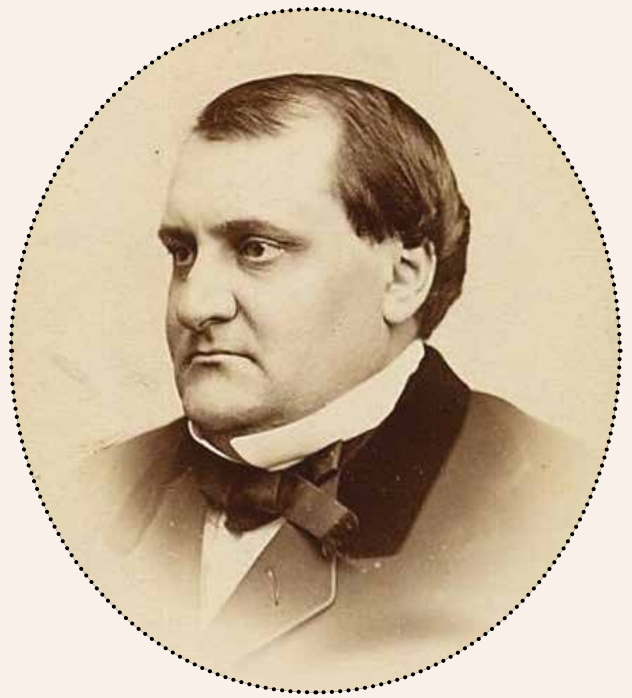


BALLINASLOE AND THE BONAPARTE CONNECTION

When reading about the great farmstead at Ganaveen outside Ballinasloe I saw where Prince Joseph Charles Bonaparte had come to see the farm. Although I had been born and reared in Ballinasloe I had never heard that a member of The Napoleon family had visited our town, and amazingly he had actually visited Ballinasloe twice. I was curious to see who this important visitor was and so I had to delve into French History. The story I unearthed was I believe both exciting and melodramatic but too complex for this article.

After Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat at Waterloo the French Monarchy was reinstated leading to a period of fear and uncertainty among the French people. This ended in 1848 with the Declaration of The Second Republic. Our visitor Prince Joseph Charles Napoleon Bonaparte was elected to the new Assembly along with his older cousin Prince Louis who was voted in as President. Louis had been a very active Pamphleteer, in modern times he would I suppose have been a Blogger. He was very popular with the vast majority of French people and had increased the voting numbers from about 750,000 to about 7.5 million during the first years of The Second Republic. This of itself led to worry among the middle and upper classes that - 'Power might rest in the hands of those who possessed absolutely nothing'. This fear is still in evidence today in most countries. When after four years Louis found he could not legally continue as President of The Assembly and knowing he had the support of the people he simply abolished the Assembly and declared himself Emperor.

His cousin our visitor, was part of The Emperor's Government and as such was a very important person indeed. His reasons for visiting Ireland for a holiday in 1857 were both personal and scientific. Personal in that he wished to pay a visit to Donegal where his father's first wife Betsy Patterson's father had come from, and secondly he wished to see the Great Telescope at Birr. The Donegal Patterson connection with the Bonaparte family is an intriguing



one in itself, perhaps to be told on another day.

Having explored his Donegal connection Prince Joseph sailed on his own Yacht from Derry to Galway. On mooring off Galway he was greeted by a 21 Gun Salute from a Naval ship anchored in The bay. This caused great panic in The Cladagh where the people thought the French were invading. A Galway paper reported that all were struck by Prince Joseph's likeness to his illustrious ancestor The Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

He boarded a train at Galway and was met at Ballinasloe by the great and the good of the town and escorted to a dinner in his honour. I believe at this dinner his Confessor, The Abbe Cruise, who had Ballinasloe connections, told him the story of the Battle of Aughrim in 1691 and its link to General San Ruth and the French fallen at that most deadly affair.



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He continued his journey by coach to Birr where he viewed the Telescope called Leviathan, which was in its time the largest such instrument in the world and allowed The Earl of Rosse to make remarkably accurate drawings of Galaxies. Unfortunately The Earl was not present to greet him but Prince Joseph was well satisfied with his visit. On this occasion he continued his journey in stages to Limerick where his yacht was moored waiting to take him to Kerry and later to Cork and home to France. In later years General de Gaulle also holidayed in Kerry.

On a Historical note, I believe the Emperor on hearing the Aughrim story from Joseph, ordered a Set of Vestments to be made in Paris and they were delivered to The Parish Priest of Aughrim in 1858 around the time St. Michael's Church was dedicated. The vestments bearing the Imperial Symbol of The Bumble Bee may be seen in Aughrim and Loughrea museums.

Prince Joseph's second visit was for a far more down to earth reason and was motivated by the Emperor's wish to improve French agricultural practises. It is hard to believe but the situation in France at that time was each region more or less did its own thing which often led to Famine in a Land of Plenty. On this visit Joseph arrived in Dunlaoire, or Kingstown as it was known then and spent his first day at The Model Farm attached to The Albert College, which has since become part of U.C.D. It is recorded that in the afternoon he dined at The Gresham Hotel before rejoining his Yacht at Dunlaoire.

Early the following morning he travelled to Westland Row by train and from there to The Broadstone Station by Cab. It was noted he personally chose the poorest cab for himself. From The Broadstone Station he travelled to Ballinasloe and this time was met by Lord Clancarty who treated him to breakfast at Garbally. After breakfast he escorted him to Lismany to meet Alan Pollok the owner of the Farmstead at Ganaveen. I have been unable to penetrate the French Archives to view any correspondence this visit may have generated within France, but suffice to say he could not have been other than impressed by the farm. Even by today's standards it was remarkable, and on the cattle side it could in one Byre house over two hundred in two rows of individual pens accessed in the centre for feeding via individual troughs and at the rear for disposal of waste material.

The by-product of the animals was turned into gas and was used to light the sheds and also to power various milling engines. Prince Joseph returned to Ballinasloe where Lord Clancarty showed him various other farms and then departed by train for Dublin. Having made his way back to Dunlaoire he boarded his yacht and set sail for France.

Even by today's standards he accomplished a lot in two days and this mind you in 1860.

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Cllr. AISLING DOLAN has been nominated to contest the forthcoming Seanad Elections on the Agricultural panel. The only Fine Gael candidate for the Galway-Roscommon constituency in the recent General Election, Aisling has been nominated by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

OLIVER (Ollie) CALLAGHY, Crossconnell, Clontuskert, who passed away in his late sixties, was a former employee of the ESM in Ballinasloe. He was a member of the Kiltormer team that won the Galway county minor hurling title in 1970.

CLONTUSKERT Annual Spring Clean-up will take place on Monday, 6th April. Volunteers are required and they will be provided with bags, gloves etc. for the session.

TRISTAN McDONAGH, the Ballinasloe dual world champion power lifter, hopes to win another world title belt when he competes in the WPC National Championships in Limerick in April and qualify for the World Finals in Lithuania. McDonagh currently holds world titles in the WRPF and IPL sections of the 75kg classes.

KILLURE HERITAGE GROUP are compiling a book "Killure/ Kilgerrill-It's People and Places" and are looking for any old photos, stories from bygone days, for inclusion in the second edition of the parish's history.

MOORE AND CLONFAD Dramatic Society's three-act play "The Stations" has been rescheduled for a later date following its cancellation in March due to the Corona virus.

CAPPATAGGLE Hurling Club have volunteered to help out in the current climate by shopping, collecting prescriptions, supplying fuel etc. to the elderly and those housebound. To allay any fears they have published the names and contact numbers of volunteers who are willing to help those in the locality, if required.

BALLINASLOE SOCIAL SERVICES are looking for your copper coins to help run their services. Donations of one, two and five cent coins would be appreciated.

WEEKEND MASSES from Loughrea Cathedral are available via webcam at www.loughreacathedral.ie on Saturday evenings at 8 pm and on Sundays at 10 am and 12 noon. Galway Bay FM also broadcast Mass live at 11.30 on Sunday mornings.

THREE PARISHES in East Galway experienced fatal farming accidents in recent weeks. They included Fohenagh, New Inn and Kiltormer where senior men were the unfortunate victims.

DOWN MEMORY LANE-40 YEARS AGO

The Dubarry Closing Room Soccer Team who competed for the Adrian Jordan Cup



Back row, l to r: Declan O'Connor, Ned Murray, Tommy McGrath, Alfie Walshe, Tommy Treacy.
Front, l to r: Brendan McNally, Albert Duane, Martin McNally, Raymond O'Hara, Bobby Burke.



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