

# BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Issue 06 Feb/Mar 2012



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# BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Issue 06 Feb/Mar 2012

## RÉAMHRÁ



*We have been fortunate with a mild, though wet, winter and this edition arrives to our doorsteps with the usual cacophony of noise and counter claim as to the future of St. Brigid's. It is hard to believe that after almost 179 years caring for some of those most vulnerable in our society, that an admission facility so long associated with the town is not under threat, but it seems is being prepared for extinction. We have witnessed the transformation of the East Galway and South Roscommon Mental Health Service over the past*

*20 years from institutional to community based care and know the real impact the locked gates on the Main hospital and the boarded up windows on the Nurses Home and other State Buildings, out in Creagh has had.*

*Under the strain of the public finances, everything that has been taken for granted service wise is up for grabs, subject to more cost cutting etc. Hopefully we will not have to wake up to more bad news stories on the continual wind down of St. Brigid's or elsewhere but this is what the reality of fiscal adjustment means. Even in the past recessions State assets, land holdings facilities have been utilised for the empowerment and provision of jobs for communities. Where is the masterplan being discussed or reviewed for the 200 Acres and functional buildings still owned by the State who have been ordered to dump assets in a firesale? What are this communities plans or priorities (if any) to build on a legacy of 179 years service to psychiatric patients and their families in the West and Midlands? It's very easy play the blame game. St. Brigid's was akin to the shipyard of the town for 179 years, as an institution it had it's flaws no doubt but equally it was a huge development engine for the town. Most of the town's clubs and activities that we take for granted have their genesis in the nursing and support staff from that hospital.*

*Are we going to continue to hide behind the bed number game or move to a serious debate on what to do with an iconic building? It is our Custom House, a fine set of grounds and a legacy that could be built upon. Or will we just let the authorities board it all up, a crumbling eyesore on the main eastern approach to our town, to remind us that when we are all pointing fingers no one was looking at the bigger picture? The generation just being born, who will still be paying the subordinated bond holders in 2031 will not thank us for just shrugging our shoulders anymore.*

*Le gach Dea Ghuí.  
Colm Croffy, Editor*



*Happy new year to all our readers. It's hard to believe that we've now completed all 6 issues in Volume 1. The initial plan was to issue 3,000 copies of a 32 page magazine but demand dictated that we produce 4,500 bi-monthly. Community contributions ensured we had enough material to expand to 48 pages (56 in the Christmas edition). As only a very small percentage of the Voluntary Organisations in the Town catchment area have submitted articles, we continue to encourage*

*contributions from new sources. Your PRO has a key role to play in this. I would encourage more people young and old to get involved in the many positive initiatives that are taking place in our community. It reflects well on the individual and is a positive addition to any CV.*

*At the Enterprise Centre we continue to upgrade our 27,000 sq. ft facility and a major Capital Programme is being undertaken to replace the existing flat roof. This will cost in excess of €175,000. We also have appointed a new Manager (Lyn Donnelly) and we wish her every success in her new role. Helen Kelly is leaving us and we thank her sincerely for her contribution to the Company over the past 4 years and wish her continued success, health and happiness for the future.*

*Seamus Duffy, Chairman  
Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.*

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# BEC

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An Initiative of Ballinasloe Area Community

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# Ballinasloe's First Leas Ceann Comhairle (Deputy Speaker)

Writes Colm Croffy

After some 37 years of continual public representative life at Oireachtas level, Castleblakeney native Michael Kitt TD was nominated for the position of Deputy Speaker of Dáil Eireann by the Taoiseach last March.

However to add to East Galway's historic moment it fell to Caltra native Eamon Gilmore, the Tánaiste, to place the order for the formal vote during his speaking time. In a sense it is a fitting honour for a gentleman who knew the Taoiseach since their teacher training college days and is a well regarded deputy who served as Junior Minister in two Departments during the Fianna Fáil led administrations.

He served under Brian Cowen as the Minister for Overseas Aid when he was in Foreign Affairs and under John Gormley when he was Minister for Local Government and Water Services in the last Government. Of the two departments, he acknowledges tactfully that the Local Government posting was of more value to his constituents citing investments in Library Services, Fire Stations and fire fighting upgrades as well as the countless number of water and sanitation schemes supported and signed off during his tenure.

Personally though, it was some of the immediacy of the interventions and the sustainability of the development programme rolled out in countries like Mozambique, Tanzania, and Malawi that left a lasting legacy with him. "You could not but feel a huge sense of pride and gratitude for the huge professional and selfless commitment shown by our Irish Aid workers and volunteers and some of the scenes witnessed and people I met with live with me forever."

Looking back on the Bertie Years he is quite candid with his analysis "We probably spent too much, encouraged too much state generosity in both wages and welfare and reduced too much the scope of the tax net, but it is now dawning on everyone that the €19 Billion of fiscal adjustment is going to be very painful to realise."

For all the blame laid at Fianna Fáil for the woes, he is certain about some of the positives which are rarely mentioned now, "Our continual investment over the 13 years or so across the sectors but especially in infrastructure and education will quietly repay society over the years



to come, between special needs and one teacher schools and of course the new motorway system, of which the M6 was the first to be completed, will have lasting impacts."

Over his 37 years, narrowing the focus to just Ballinasloe, he cites the marked improvement in the facilities of the town in education, sports, amenity, tourism, housing, industrial and health as huge advancing steps. When asked if he is at all fearful of the future he is disarmingly optimistic "The last major recession of the 80's you had two huge problems that thankfully are not as prevalent now, despondency and political instability. While people are annoyed and angry they are not despondent, there are 1.8 million still working and the new government has a powerful majority to implement all the decisions it needs to."

He believes that Agri-business, Tourism and the Green Energy Agenda are three areas that have the short term capacity to provide jobs and some economic growth. In looking at the town's core of health services he claims to be fairly positive on the outlook especially Portiuncula. "The Unions and Senior Health Managers seem to have realised that the acknowledged quality of the Maternity and Paediatric Services in the overall delivery of specialist and acute

healthcare for this region can't be done without. The appointment of the new Consultant surgeons and the filling of the other vacant posts all augurs well" states Michael.

He is also hopeful that some clarity will be brought to the St. Brigid's situation and that some of the ideas spoken about before in terms of, acute beds, sheltered housing for elderly and maybe looking at some ground dispersal for sporting bodies should be fasttracked. Viewing the town Centre, the TD believes that the redevelopment of the old convent as a new library facility will improve that end of Society Street and cites the wonderful recent work done by Galway County Council in transforming churches in Oranmore, Loughrea and Gort, into Libraries, bodes well.

He believes that the free and relaxing of on-street parking restrictions after Christmas was so well received that the whole pay for parking scheme needs to be reviewed again with a view to supporting the town centre business and recognising more fully that the town serves a rural hinterland rather than a suburban one. He would like more done for those homeowners with mortgage arrears in the new year and hopes the well flagged Government proposals will meet some of the need to restructure debt without people losing their homes. He also hopes that the brain drain on the 20 to 35 year old age group will slow down with some serious job creation strategies.

Looking at the state of the very small parliamentary party of Fianna Fáil, the organisation and especially locally in East Galway he is buoyed up by the reaction the renewal meetings that the party are having under Party Leader Michael Martin. "We had 300 supporters for a very soul searching meeting in Loughrea recently and we are very focused on selecting quality candidates for the 2014 local elections. Our Árd Fhéis in March will see us signal that we are seeking more younger and female activists to carry the flag into the field and we are all confident that renewal will happen."

All told a busy year ahead for man who like his boss Ceann Comhairle Sean Barrett, has to put the likes of Mattie McGrath and even his party colleague Éamon Ó Cuiv into their box during Dáil exchanges and procedures!

**Michael can be contacted by Email: [michael.kitt@oireachtas.ie](mailto:michael.kitt@oireachtas.ie) or at his Castleblakeney Office. Tel: 090 9678147**

# New Generation Entrepreneurs



## Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

The fourth annual BEST Competition (Ballinasloe Entrepreneurial Skills Tournament) organised by Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre has short listed its finalists for this year's Dragon Den style Finale. The aim of BEST is to promote an entrepreneurial spirit in the youth of Ballinasloe, the next generation of entrepreneurs. The Competition is open to all students in both secondary schools, Ardscoil Mhuire and St. Joseph's College, Garbally Park. The competition received over 80 applications again this year. All entrants attended a workshop on the

20th January 2012 in Ardscoil Mhuire to announce the 1st round winners. The Judges for the Competition are Declan Lenehan, Mary Molloy and John Power (Chairperson).

### The following 12 qualified for the final

- Declan Ryan, Colin Cotton, Karl Feehily
- Holly Burdess, Bronwyn Latham
- Paul Regan, Diarmuid Claffey
- Andrei Pirghie, Lucian Brooks, Michael Burnell.
- Ronan Kelly, Sean Deane, Jacob Walsh
- Sarah Loughnane
- Rachel Coen
- Pearse Coffey

- Alan Kelly
- Kevin Hendrick
- Ros McKeon
- Cathal Shields, Rory Barrett, Kevin Curley, Leon Glynn.

The judges were very impressed this year with the calibre of ideas from the students which included projects from the technology industry, sports, agriculture, music and practical solutions to everyday problems.

The Finalists will now present their projects at the Dragons Den stage where they will pitch to the judges. All participants are then invited to an awards ceremony in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel on the 22nd of March where the winners will be announced and a prominent entrepreneur will give a speech to the students and their parents. The lucky winning student or students will received a cash prize of €1,000 for their education, second and third runners up prizes receive €500 and €150 each.

BEST is sponsored by the Ballinasloe Credit Union and Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre. The Galway City and County Enterprise Board are also sponsors.



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# 60 Years in the Family Business

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

*The Duffy name has been synonymous with business in Ballydangan for many years. In fact, the family has been trading in various businesses like self storage, agri-supplies, plant hire, transport and a supermarket for over the last 60 years. Recently the family have branched into home appliances and have adapted the business to local demands for value for money and sell products at up to 70% Discount to the recommended retail price.*

*"We deal in ex-catalogue, graded, shop returns, refurbished and end-of-line stock. We have a wide range of products from household appliances, consumer electronics to household furniture. Our washing machines start from €129 and we have a large selection of tumble dryers from €140," Fergal explains.*

*"We have new products coming in each week such as 140 Litre wheelie bins at €20 and Dexion Shelving at €60/bay which gives our customers great value at massive discounted prices"*

*Located adjacent to Millar's pub in Ballydangan, just between Ballinasloe and Athlone on the old N6 road, Duffy Discount has also opened a new store in Athlone. They are based in Unit 2 Westpoint Business Park, Monksland, Athlone. The store is opposite the entrance to Élan in the same business park as Super Savers and Tile Warehouse.*

*Duffy Discount is a one-stop-shop for all your household appliance needs, offering brand names at discounted prices across a large range of washing machines, dishwashers, fridges, tumble dryers, televisions, freezers, hobs/ovens, vacuums and much, much, more, along with delivery nationwide.*

## duffydiscount.com

*All products also come with a six month warranty. Duffy Discount store also provide the service the "Appliance Hospital" for repairing washing machines, dish washers or cookers, where they offer a free assessment of your appliance. The repairs department will then let the customer know the cost of fixing the machine before proceeding. The shop also recently expanded into racking, storage and shelving at very low prices.*

*Along with great bargains, one of the great advantages of shopping locally according to Fergal Duffy is that customers are dealing with local people they know, who are in tune with their needs and wants and can provide excellent after-care service. Spending locally also supports jobs and the local economy and community.*

*Duffy Discount store can be accessed via Exit 13 off the new M6 motorway from Ballinasloe. "The motorway has diverted traffic away from our business but we have noticed that people are willing to travel in search of great value. We have people coming from all over the Midlands and West to visit our store and see our great range of products at up to 70% Discount to the recommended retail price" Fergal Duffy states.*

*The full range of Duffy Discount products can be viewed at [www.duffydiscount.com](http://www.duffydiscount.com) or [www.facebook.com/duffydiscount](http://www.facebook.com/duffydiscount). For further information call Duffy Discount 090 9673261 or Email: [info@duffydiscount.com](mailto:info@duffydiscount.com)*

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Joan 087 3521213 or Emmet 087 6629953

**BSMRG**

Developing and supporting a community response to substance misuse issues in the Ballinasloe area.



**Western Region**  
drugs task force  
Meitheal Drugeáil an Tairthair

## Substance Misuse Response Group



Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

*Ballinasloe Substance Misuse Response Group is a community group that has been set up to develop and support a community response to substance misuse issues in Ballinasloe and the surrounding area. The Group is made up of interested members of the community and also representatives from some of the local agencies in the town. The Ballinasloe Substance Misuse Response Group began to meet in January 2010 and the group, since July 2010, has an official constitution along with a chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary and other supporting officers. The group has*

*secured premises, meets regularly and has developed two new services that serve the town and East Galway as a whole. A "Drop In Information Service" that is open every Thursday evening from 6.30pm to 7.30pm. A facilitated "Family Support Group" that meets every Thursday from 8.00pm to 9.15pm. The BSMRG has also organised an official launch, a website and telephone support for the services. The group continues to meet regularly and is working on ongoing projects for 2012 that raise awareness regarding drug and alcohol misuse and promote positive alternatives. For further information please contact Pdraig Lyons on 087 6832721.*



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# New BACD Manager Appointed

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd. (BACD) has recently announced the appointment of Lynn as Company Manager.

Lynn is a resident of Laurencetown, Ballinasloe and a native of Dublin, where she qualified as a Civil Engineer in 2003. She began her engineering career in Galway, before moving to Athlone, where she diversified into management and marketing in conjunction with her engineering expertise.

In the Role of Manager, Lynn will be responsible for the implementation of the strategic decisions of BACD Ltd, managing the Enterprise Centre, marketing the Centre and Ballinasloe Town as a location for enterprise and investment, as well as promoting and supporting local community projects and businesses.

Lynn is passionate about the challenge of her new role, "I'm delighted about my appointment and am really excited about the challenge of my new role as BEC Manager. I think what BACD Ltd have achieved to date is fantastic, the existing premises in Creagh and the work carried out by BACD Ltd to date is something to be very proud of. They have proven that a community can come together to create sustainable employment for local people." She is looking forward to contributing towards the continued success of the company by meeting and building relationships with the local community groups and existing businesses in Ballinasloe and surrounding areas. The Chair of BACD Seamus Duffy welcomed Lynn to her new full-time role in Ballinasloe and stated that the Directors, partners and members of the Development Group



Outgoing BACD Manager, Helen Kelly with Chairman Seamus Duffy and Newly appointed Manager Lynn.

would endeavour to support and assist her fully in realising the ambitions of the company. Seamus also paid tribute to her predecessor Helen Kelly who is stepping down for family reasons having spent some four years at the post." The Board at the handover meeting expressed great gratitude to Helen, as a lady of outstanding professional acumen and abilities and wished her well with her future endeavours after overseeing huge infrastructural development and professional management implementation systems here at the Centre and Company."

The Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre is now a bustling community, home to fourteen enterprises, employing in excess of 180 people contributing to the local Ballinasloe economy. The Centre provides flexible work space and support services to encourage the establishment and development of early stage and developing enterprises.



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## Queen of The Fair Enters Galway Rose Contest

Cathriona Farrell is a candidate in this year's Galway Rose Competition which will be held in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel on Saturday, April 7th. The Fair & Festival would like to wish her every success in the event and hopefully we will have a Galway Rose in this year's Rose of Tralee. Cathriona is from Craughwell and represented the Dunlo Tavern last September. She is a student in DCU, studying Physical Education and Biology. She is also a wonderful athlete and has represented Ireland in the high jump at many international events winning four gold medals in the process.

Cathriona is the daughter of Tommy and Bridie Farrell and niece of Margaret Clarke, Dunlo St. As a career she would love to teach in her native county Galway and become a professional athlete!

Best of luck from all in Ballinasloe!

**Ballinasloe October Fair & Festival dates:**  
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# BEC

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An initiative of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.

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# Parking Token Pilot Scheme to Help Town Centre Shopping



At the launch were (L-R): Mark O'Donnell, Sean Fletcher, Gabriel Rohan, Mike Kelly (Town Mayor), Donal Scannell (Chamber of Commerce), Brendan Kelly (KPW Print) and Cllr. Carmel Greally.

To mark the token use the following as an example:  
**10.30am on Monday, February 6th**  
**30 min - PARKING TOKEN**

50c = 30mins No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please Circle the Start Hour, Minutes, Day, Month & Date

Hours: 10:30  
 Minutes: 30  
 Month: FEB  
 Date: 6

MON TUE  
 WED THUR  
 FRI SAT

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
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8	9	10	11	12	13
15	16	17	18	19	20
22	23	24	25	26	27
29	30	31			

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## Writes Brian Murphy

A new pilot parking token was officially launched by Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce in association with Ballinasloe Town Council. The initiative was first proposed by the Chamber as a way of making customers experience in town more convenient.

A large crowd attended the launch on January 11th, which included members of Ballinasloe Active Retirement Association who have warmly welcomed the introduction of these tokens. Speaking at the launch, Cllr. Mike Kelly, Mayor of Ballinasloe, welcomed the initiative and he expressed the hope that this would encourage people to come into the town centre and shop local. President of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Donal Scannell, paid tribute to the Town Council for their co-operation and he thanked Sean Fletcher for his work on

the project. He also thanked KPW Print for their generous sponsorship of the parking tokens printing costs. The tokens will be available for purchase from a number of retail outlets in the town and they will entitle the holder to 30 minutes of parking on the main streets of the town which are designated pay and display areas.

The illustration above indicates how to use the tokens. It is necessary to clearly mark on your token the start time, the day, month and date. The parking tokens will be available for a trial period initially in order to gauge interest in the scheme.

The Tokens are available from the following retail outlets:  
**Society Street:** Concannons Spar, J&S Photos, Fletchers, Jorenas. **Main Street:** Salmons, Kellers, Stronges. **St. Michaels Square:** Costcutters. **Dunlo Street:** Pat Harneys and Clarkes.

# Shearwater Apprentice Brian

## Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Brian Brennan represented the Carlton Shearwater in the Final of the Carlton Apprentice Competition. Brian has been an integral part of the staff for the last two and a half years working as a fitness instructor and swimming teacher. The Creagh native's enthusiasm, hard work and creativity was noticed and rewarded when asked to participate in the All-Ireland competition competing against 10 other young aspiring employees from different Carlton Hotels dotted around the country.

The concept was based on that of the Irish reality television series "The Apprentice." The 22 year old who attended Garbally College and GMIT was shocked and surprised, on being asked to represent the Shearwater "I was so shocked, I couldn't believe they thought that highly of me that I could go on and represent them in this competition, of course I said yes straight away. I jumped at the chance not only for the opportunity and experience but because I always fancied myself as a bit of an entrepreneur when I was younger."

A series of Sales and Marketing drives and activities were undertaken as part of the Competition with Brian heavily marketing and selling the Hotel and town but unfortunately, General Manager Martin Daly had to break the news that he had come second and missed out on first place to Louise Rennison from the Carlton Castletroy Park Hotel by the smallest of margins only €230. Martin Daly went on to say that "the Shearwater was very proud of his efforts, he approached the competition with great enthusiasm and we value him as a strong member of our staff, there was a lot more to come in 2012 for Brian and the Carlton Shearwater."

The Shearwater has recognised Brian's abilities and has sent him on numerous courses in sales techniques after the competition. Brian received a certificate for his attributes and for coming second in the competition at the award ceremonies in Kinsale last month.



# Gables Popup Gallery Success



## Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

**Thanks to an initiative by the Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce and support from the Town Council, the Gables Art Group were given the opportunity to open a Popup Gallery in Dunlo Street.**

The premises, which were kindly donated by local solicitor, John Glynn, became a showroom for over 100 paintings during a seven week period from November to January.

Following hard work by all group members to set up the facility and a daily rota of volunteers, the Gallery provided a chance for local artists to show their talents and chat to visitors about their pieces and everything art. It also gave people with an interest in art to find out more and how they could pursue their interest.

The Gables Art Group has over 33 active members and is always looking for new vibrant members with an interest in art. Gables Art Group member Betty Noone said “the group is great, a real escape from the hassles of everyday life, no matter what your artistic ability its very therapeutic, really good for the soul, keeps the mind and body active, no matter what age you are young or old the group will welcome you with open arms.”

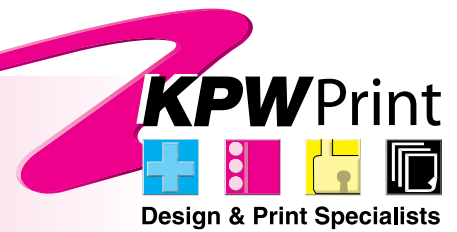
The Gables Art Group was formed in the early nineties by local artist the late Nano Kenny and classes currently operate from St. Teresa’s behind St. Brigid’s Hospital in Creagh on Tuesday evenings from 8pm to 10pm and Wednesday mornings from 10am to 12am, classes are with Maura and Jackie, two very experienced artists in the group.

Gables Art Group Chairperson, Jackie Eastwood, concluded that “The Group are very appreciative of Donal Scannell for his initiative, John and Jeanette Glynn for the use of their premises, the Mayor, Mike Kelly and the Town Council for their valued support. Our members have worked hard over the last few weeks to bring the Gallery project to fruition and a successful conclusion. It has been an invaluable and worthwhile experience for all those concerned.”

The Gables Art Group hold many social gatherings and outings. Their annual exhibition will take place in spring/summer in Gullane’s Hotel. Keep posted for more details. If you would like to get in contact with the Gables Art Group call Jackie Eastwood on 087 2341535 or Email [JackieArt@iol.ie](mailto:JackieArt@iol.ie)



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# Credit Union Factor Under Way



Ronan Finn performing as Elvis Presley at last year's CU Factor.

**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

Ballinasloe Credit Union will once again be hosting the annual CU Factor talent competition in April 2012. In recent times talent shows have become a notable genre of reality television. In the wake of the X Factor and the Voice of Ireland, (which is currently airing on RTÉ), it is easy to forget how rich in talent Ballinasloe actually is at a more local level.

Following on from the success of last year's competition the Credit Union is delighted to support this initiative designed to allow the youth of Ballinasloe to showcase their talent. The competition will be run in a similar format to last year. Auditions will be held in late March with the top acts progressing to the final in April. The overall winner and runner up will represent Ballinasloe in to the Galway final, which will be held in the Town Hall Theatre Galway in May.

Auditions for the talent competition are open to all under the age of 21, so if you have a talent in song, music, dance, comedy etc. Please come along to the auditions and we will give you an opportunity to stage this talent.

To see the highlights of last years Galway's final logon to the Ballinasloe Credit Union website at [www.ballinasloecreditunion.ie](http://www.ballinasloecreditunion.ie), or check it out on our Facebook page. Entry forms are available to download on the Ballinasloe Credit Union website.

## Cycling to Work - Keeping Fit!

**Writes Niall Clarke**

Cycling is more than just a method of transportation to many: It's also a great way to get and keep fit. With the cost of keeping your car on the road ever increasing, people are now rediscovering the tried and tested bicycle as an alternative means of transport, only this time it comes with tax benefits. The cycle to work scheme was introduced in 2009 as a means of encouraging people to cycle to work. The scheme not only has benefits for your pocket but your health also. Cycling keeps you fit - it's fast, cheap and reliable - and it's good for the environment.

The cycle to work scheme covers bicycles and accessories up to a maximum retail price of €1000. Taking part in the scheme is easy once your employer decides to do so. Your employer purchases the bike and equipment on your behalf and you pedal away. The decision as to whether the employer buys the bike for you or you pay via salary deductions is a matter between you and your employer. Either way you both save tax, the employee will not be liable to income tax, PRSI or other levies. The employer will also benefit in that employer's PRSI is not payable on the cost of the bicycle and/or safety equipment. The full cost of the bicycle must be recovered within a maximum period of twelve months and the salary deduction will be reflected in the employee's pay over that period. Once an employer agrees to participate, there is no limit to the number of employees who can avail of the scheme. Depending on your marginal rate of income tax you can save up to 51% on the cost of a new bicycle. Employee's can save up to €510 on a bike and equipment retailing a €1000. At the other spectrum of the tax bracket a saving of €90 is achieved on a bike retailing at €300.

Regular cyclists tend to be fitter and healthier than non-cyclists and at Stanley Clarke Cycles Dunlo street, (one of the oldest bicycles shops in Ireland), set up in 1943, you can choose from an extensive range of bikes that cater for all levels of cycling enthusiasts. We are a registered Bicycle shop with all of the various companies that promote the cycle to work scheme. So why not call in and check it out for yourself and cycle away tax free!



Pakie and Stanley Clarke outside Clarke's Cycle Shop in 1964.

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# New Reporter & Development

## Writes Colm Croffy

After five months at the word processor and stapled to the phone harassing PROs for dates and captions, Inverin lass and University of Limerick Undergraduate Caitriona Ní Cathain filed her last piece of copy Christmas week (you can read it in this edition, the Bees article). Caitriona toiled long and hard for the publication especially with the mammoth 56 page Christmas edition. She is now undertaking a six month Erasmus placement in Barcelona, somewhere a little sunnier than Ballinasloe, and we wish her well in her future career.

Taking up the baton (or is that mouse?) is a local lad but this time a NUIG Undergraduate Barra Ó Crofaigh. 21 year old Barra is a humanities student undertaking his work placement until late summer and will be grappling with Volume 2: Editions 1 to 3, as well as the last edition of Vol 1. We wish him well in his role as Press and Communications Assistant with AOIFE and as the Reporter with Ballinasloe Life.

Plans are underway after our successful piloting of Volume 1. Thanks to the original 26 subscribers we are pleased to announce that we will be publishing on the same format as last year. This means that our readers will see editions appearing first week of April, first week of June, first week August, first week of October and first week of December with an enhanced special Christmas Edition. Copy deadlines will be advised and again the publication will be available in online format. Volume 1's six editions cost nearly €40,000 to produce. The bulk of this money is raised from our local advertisers, supplemented with a development subsidy of €5,000 from BACD. This development subsidy will not stay in place for ever and if the publication can secure more advertising it can guarantee it's future sustainability. The project team are canvassing for new subscribers to come on board and attractive rate cards



Caitriona Ní Cathain



Barra Ó Crofaigh

will be launched in late February for once off advertisers. It is hoped to have a Small Advertisers Section for Handyman and local services on a prepay basis. On average 4,500 copies are printed on each run with a little over 3,000 being delivered to the homes/apartments throughout the urban area thanks to the Garbally Transition Year Students, BACD Board members, AOIFE Crew and the Ballinasloe Training For Employment attendees. Over 1000 copies are distributed between our subscribing Hotels where the magazine is used as marketing collateral in guest rooms.

The Project Team and Board of the Development Company are keen to provide the Community Magazine free to households in the Urban area but to keep up with the demand for additional copies are going to Trial a scheme where Additional copies can be bought from four selected outlets in the locality at €2 per copy (Dolan's, Salmon's, Concannon's and P&M Kelly's). All comments and suggestions are very welcome as to how we can continue to develop the magazine.



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# Local Public Representatives Conference This September

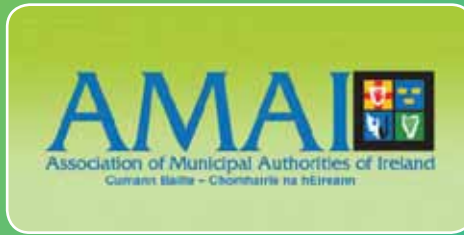
**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

*Ballinasloe is gearing itself up to host the 100th Anniversary of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland (AMAI) at the Carlton Shearwater Hotel this coming September.*

*The AMAI (the representative body for Town Councils nationally) is expecting that over 400 delegates will gather for the 3 day conference on September 14th, 15th and 16th which is estimated to be worth in excess of €100,000 to the local economy.*

*Town Councillor, Johnny Walsh who is also a member of the standing council and executive of the AMAI and who spearheaded the successful bid to attract this high profile event stated that the Town Council led organising committee are very much looking forward to welcoming the delegates and their partners to Ballinasloe for what promises to be a tremendous weekend of hospitality, great food, music, golf and some shopping.*

*President of the Association Cllr. Ted Howlin, outlined how they were producing a 320 page history of the*



*organisation which has had three Knights of the Realm among its first Presidents and they will also be returning to the Dublin City Hall for a commemoration to mark the day they were founded. "We are all looking very much forward to being in Ballinasloe for our historic anniversary and are pleased with the work the local committee are undertaking." Cllr. Mike Kelly, Mayor*

*of Ballinasloe stated "As Mayor, I am delighted that Ballinasloe has secured the hosting of the 100th Anniversary AMAI Conference. It is always a pleasure to welcome people to town, and we look forward to welcoming the delegates in September, and hopefully the delegates will enjoy their stay and make many return visits to our town."*

*Delegates attending the conference are encouraged to book early to secure hotel accommodation in the town's 4 hotels. The Full programme will be launched in late Spring but the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan TD, will be in attendance as well as a host of other EU, State Planning and Local Authority specialists and officials.*

*Mark O'Donnell, Town Clerk stated "We're looking forward to hosting a very successful conference later this year, and the Council members and executive will continue to work in conjunction with the AMAI to ensure that the 100th Anniversary conference will be a memorable event for all and also raises the profile of our town, for national conferences."*

## Connacht Fleadh in Ballinasloe

**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

*The Galway County Board of Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann and Ballinasloe CCE will host the Connacht Fleadh Ceoil in July this year, bringing thousands of people to the town for a week of events celebrating the best of our Irishness in Music, Song, Dance, Language and some sport. The last time the prestigious provincial event was held locally was in 2002 - a decade ago, while the County Fleadh was held here in 2004.*

*The competitive weekend of the 6th to the 8th will attract between eight to ten thousand visitors, competitors, family and enthusiasts, for music, song and dance, attracting many of Ireland's top musicians for sessions and craic. Over 1,500 competitors in various different grades and sections will be competing to see who will get through to their section at the All-Ireland Fleadh in Cavan in late August.*

*Whilst an expected significant boost to the town for its summer programme, the event is anticipated to cost the local branch in excess of €43,000 to stage and despite a welcome grant from the local Town Council - the committee have a lot of fund raising to do between now and kick off. A music marathon and bag pack is planned for the Tesco Shopping complex among other activities.*

*The local organising committee under Chairperson Michael Cusack, Secretary Phil Whyte and Treasurer Kevin Whyte - assisted by all the CCE local branch members, are putting a huge effort in to make this a spectacular success. "This will provide a unique opportunity to the business community to display their products and services to a huge captive audience.*



*CCE will be delighted if our business community will engage with us to make this a wonderful weekend and show Ballinasloe in a very positive manner" stated Michael.*

*Businesses in other towns that have held this event in the past few years, have organised street markets on the Saturday and Sundays, street spectacle events, and have reported very positive results, with towns competing to hold the Provincial Fleadhs in their towns for succeeding years.*

*"Beidh Ceol agus craic ar fud an Bhaile. Make sure you are part of it and give Ballinasloe its rightful place on the map, we have a long illustrious tradition of supporting and encouraging traditional music here in town since the famous piper Dinny Delaney" stated Michael.*

*Volunteers of all ages for door duties, car parks etc. are needed. For more information please contact Michael Cusack on 087 4114749 or Phil Whyte on 090 9645281. Alternatively visit [www.ceoltas.ie](http://www.ceoltas.ie) or look out for the new Facebook page over the next few weeks.*

# Shear Luxury Shear Excellence Shearwater



**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

**The Carlton Shearwater Hotel & C Spa is an exquisite hotel and spa resort finished to an exceptionally high 4 star standard and has become a significant pillar of the Ballinasloe Community.**

Over the last four years The Carlton Shearwater has established an excellent reputation for quality service. The primary markets attracted to the property are conference and corporate guests, whilst the hotel is also proving to be a very successful short break destination for leisure guests and tour groups and has become an industry leader in the wedding and entertainment markets.

Since opening it's doors in August 2007 the Carlton Shearwater has played host to more than 150,000 residential guests from all over the world bringing untold revenue and awareness to the town of Ballinasloe as well as attracting high profile events such as the Rose of Tralee and entertainment artists like Christy Moore, Mary Black and Tommy Tiernan

to mention but a few. When the hotel is fully booked a total of 300 additional people are in town for the night, their kitchen team has served over 120,000 hot meals since opening and the amount of people employed is a significant 70 full-time staff and 30 part time in high season.


Looking Back on season 2011, Sales Manager, Eveanna Ryan, was pleased with the Tour business segment of the market which the hotel has been recently promoting "We have well over 10,000 tour guests booked into the property in 2011 and hope to grow this and our other segments as well."

The Hotel's main function room, The Plaza Suite, is purpose built to accommodate large functions and conferences for up to 1,000 guests whilst the Business and Events Centre is exclusively designed to ensure that your business is conducted in professional surroundings, and create a unique and sophisticated environment, "We make it our business to deliver a professional service to all our guests" said Martin Daly, General Manager of the property. Over a 100 small and medium sizes conferences for business,

associations and organisations were facilitated last year and some 6 Large National Conferences ranging in delegate numbers from 240 to 500.

This winter the Hotel undertook extensive renovations to the entrance foyer of the C Spa, installing a new reception zone, changing facilities and a modern coffee dock for day spa users. "The Spa and Health and Leisure segment of the market is one that we signalled from the start we wanted this property to be a flagship for and this considerable investment will help us in maintaining that for season 2012". commented Martin.

The rapidly expanding Irish Hotel Brand, Carlton operate this impressive 4 Star Hotel under a management contract. The property is owned and developed by prominent Galway businessman Pete Melville and the Melville family.

Looking back on a busy and trailblazing four years, public relations and branding value for Regional and National Media, obtained for Ballinasloe from activities in the Hotel is estimated to be worth over €500,000. 

# Third World Angels Home for Holidays

*Sr. Annette Farrell, home on holidays in Kilconnell, with her mother Mary.*



**Writes Pat Johnston**

**Home for the Christmas holidays is Sister Annette Farrell who has spent the last thirty years working in Tanzania.**

Sister Annette, from Kilconnell, was educated by the LSU sisters in Banagher, joined the order in Mont Vista, Athlone, after her Leaving Cert and worked as a teacher both in Banagher and the Bower as well as in France before answering her mission call to work in Africa.

Starting in Maua near Kilimanjaro and now in the capital Dar-es-Salaam, Sister Annette has worked on many education projects in the past thirty years. She is very happy with the success of the orders own school on the outskirts of Dar-es Salaam. On October 25th, 2011 the first group of students graduated from the Debrabant school called after the Frenchman who founded the La Sainte Union Sisters. It was an historic day with the new hall decked out in flowers and bunting in the national colours and the choir in full voice. The thirty one graduates looked very well in their best uniforms, enhanced by single red roses as they received their School Leaving Certificates and RE awards. During the Mass Bishop Eusebius Nzigilwa told the graduates to reflect on the story of

David and Goliath, believing that with God's help they would be equal to all the challenges they would meet in life. Dancing and singing went on into the evening and they were joined by visitors from the local community. Their parents and all the school staff were proud and thankful to witness their achievements.


Sister Annette and her colleagues also support the building and ongoing costs of Churwi, Maji Matitu and Saku primary schools, names which will be very familiar to past and present pupils of Creagh, Attyrory and Garbally whose fundraising efforts made these projects possible in the first place. They also sponsor four A-level graduates at Charambe Secondary School in order to bring down the impossibly high (80:1) student-teacher ratio. They have also funded a well and water project for that school. Meantime at their own Debrabant School they are anxiously waiting to be connected by Tanesco, the Tanzanian National Grid, to mainline electricity

Sister Annette's efforts extend beyond the field of education to help wherever she can. They have recently secured accommodation for the disabled women of Tunapenda. The house needs refurbishment but it will be a change from the cramped quarters and lack of privacy endured up to now. They have

also been able to send a group of children to Mlali Rehabilitation Centre for intensive physiotherapy. Three of the children were able to benefit from surgery performed by visiting Italian doctors at Mlali. At the centre itself they have been given seven foot-pedal sewing machines by a generous donor. They hope to train some of the mothers in their use by learning to make school uniforms and school bags.

The Cobet project supports teenage students who have missed out on early education and Sister Annette has also seen the school's steel band flourish as well as encouraging drama, creative arts and football. Indeed the school steel band had the honour of performing for President Mary McAleese on her state visit to Tanzania three years ago.

Celebrating fifty years of independence in 2011, Tanzania is one of the most stable and peaceful of African countries with a population of 45 million. A free press and support for the Millennium Development Goals are factors that give hope to the sisters and their people. Mwalimu Nyerere, the founder of Tanzania had a profound interest in quality of education as the surest way to help the young people and the nation as a whole. Sister Annette says that Nyerere is like a compass for both staff and students who are privileged to be able to look to his life for guidance and example.

Sister Annette is very grateful for the help she gets from Ireland. In particular she hopes to visit schools in Kilconnell, Creagh and Garbally, Athlone and Banagher to keep them abreast of the work their fund raising has supported. But she is aware that "the climate for fund raising was bad last time I was home, and I'd say it's much worse now. Difficult times for everybody really." She added that even small donations can make a significant difference in a situation where people are often short of basic food, school fees or even chalk for lessons. People who have supported the work of Sister Annette and her colleagues know that there is no administration costs involved and 100% of what they give is spent on the ground in Dar-es-salaam. Anyone who wishes to contribute to this work can send their donation to Sister Annette at LSU Convent, Banagher, Co Offaly. 

## ATTENTION Organisations/Clubs/Societies/Activity Groups

After six editions of volume one *Life* has come into formal contact with ONLY about 1/3 of the active groups and activities in town. We want to engage ALL strands of community and voluntary activity, not just the ones who are clamouring for space. We also want to understand the calendar of activities for the year so we can plan space in editions. To facilitate some discussion on this, to present the deadlines and copy pointers to those we have met and those we have not we are calling a meeting and asking every Club or Organisation in the locality to send their Chairperson and PRO to an Annual Meeting with the BACD *Life* Project team: Chairperson Seamus, New Manager Lynn, Editor Colm and Reporter Barra in Gullane's Hotel on Monday, 27th February at 8.30pm.

**THIS MEETING WILL NOT BE OPEN FOR ADVERTISERS OR THE BUSINESSES.**  
We would urge as many as possible seeking publicity for their activities to please attend.

# Suckside Bees Sweet as Honey!

**Writes Caitrioná Ni Cáthain**

*Suck Valley Beekeepers Association has been on the road for over twenty years now and is well established in East Galway and Roscommon. The association has an active membership of over 35 members who meet regularly in the Ballygar Bee Garden.*

*Demonstrators host a number of meetings a month depending on weather and run courses in April, May and September. There are 45 such associations scattered throughout the country under the Federation of Irish Beekeepers Associations. Many provide classes for beginners and host programmes of winter lectures that cover all aspects of beekeeping. Beekeeping is a fascinating and enjoyable hobby which can also be seen as quite therapeutic, "The more you get involved with bees you get involved with nature" said Charles Doherty, Chairman of Suck Valley Beekeepers Association*

*Queen Bees live for up to four years whereas the ordinary bee will live on average 30 days. These compelling creatures survive the winter by forming into a ball. Once the bees on the outside start to get cold they move to the middle where there are frames with winter stores that keep them going through the cold weather. Wearing appropriate clothing and knowing the best times to attend to the hive is vital to lessening the chances of getting stung while at the hive. It is a delicate type of work and one which takes time to master.*

*Charles Doherty is the club's chairman and Frank Kenny is its secretary. There is a small membership fee which includes membership of the Federation of Irish Beekeepers' Association and Third Party Insurance. They typically meet the first Tuesday of every month in Ballygar Community Centre. Further details contact Frank Kenny, Stonepark, Roscommon. Tel: 090 6626156 or Email [fkenny@gaaroscommon.ie](mailto:fkenny@gaaroscommon.ie)*



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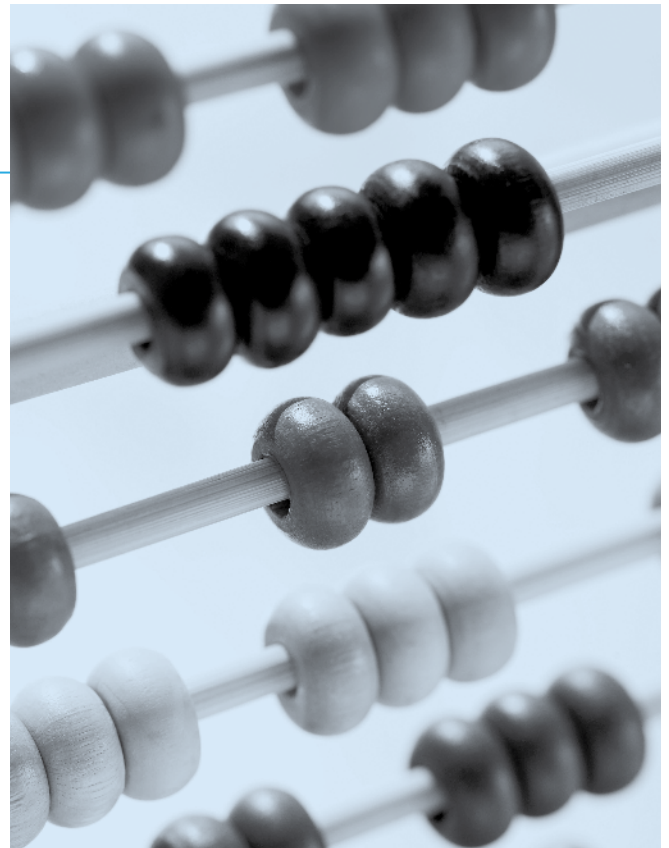
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# St. Patrick's Parade March 18th

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

**There'll be a few changes to this year's St. Patrick's Day parade, due to the fact Paddy's Day falls on a weekend, the organisers have decided to avail of the long weekend to create a festive, traditional and cultural weekend packed full of *Spraíó agus Craic*.**

At the AGM held in Gullane's Hotel Officers re-elected were J. Walsh (Chairman), Carmel Greally (Secretary), Nancy Cregg (Treasurer), with other committee members: T. Gullane, T. Colohan, D. Clarke, D. Scannell, P. Earls, D. Earls, C. Concannon, J. Greally and M. Egan. This year the parade will be held on the 18th of March (Sunday). Assembly point will be at the Fair Green at 1.30pm and it will commence at 2pm sharp. The route will be from the Fair Green via Society Street, Main Street, Slí na hÁbhainn, Harbour Road, Dunlo Street and on to St. Michael's Square for the review.

The theme for this year's parade has been left open to encourage more participation. The categories are culture, voluntary, sporting, commercial, educational and music, with a large €2,500 prize fund. There will be a special prize for the education section, with the best school getting the prize of a computer, sponsored by Ballinasloe Town Council. All schools from the locality are asked to make a big effort as the youth always give great energy and vibrancy to the parade.

There will be other prizes on the day and of course the big one the overall prize, The Pride of The Parade. All prizes are sponsored by Ballinasloe Town Council, with special thanks to the Vintners, Chamber of Commerce, AIB, Credit Union, Supermacs and Gullane's Hotel. For entry forms or any enquiries about the parade you can contact Carmel Greally on 090 9643279 or Nancy Cregg on 090 9643497 or 087 997300.

Saturday the 17th will still be jam packed as a sub group are running a heritage day. Each pub and business are being asked to decorate their window in a traditional theme a week before with the best dressed window receiving a prize. Businesses and pubs are encouraged to take their trade to the streets for all to see. Live music will be played outside pubs all over the town and publicans/businesses are encouraged to make an effort for the Rurban theme (Rural and Urban).

There will also be music and dancing at the top of the Square. People with any ideas or suggestions on the Heritage day are asked to contact Damien Clarke at 086 1704241 or Paula Earls at 086 0299544 for further details.



## Chamber Pleased With Shopping Response



*The town's retailers and business people were very welcome of the upsurge in local support for local business and responding to the Chamber of Commerce Shop Local campaign during the Christmas season. Chamber President, Donal Scannell said "We wish to thank all of our local community and hinterland who rallied around our local retailers in spending some of the Christmas splurge here in town, we would hope as the year progresses that they would continue where they can to support local business." He was also very commendable on the Town Council for their facilitation of the New Free Car Parking initiatives that worked well, "The public responded very favourably to the new scheme and we'd be hopefully that such focused and timely initiatives could maybe take place at different times of the year to boost town centre activity."*

*The Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner Dance takes place SATURDAY 4th FEBRUARY in the CARLTON SHEARWATER HOTEL.*

# Margaret Survives The Titanic

Writes Ken Kelly

**As we approach the centenary of the terrible sinking of the "Titanic" on her maiden voyage across the Atlantic in April 1912, many families in East Galway will remember the loss of their loved ones who were on board. Five people from the locality boarded the luxury liner but only one woman returned later to live out her life in East Galway.**



Margaret Hopkins (nee Mannion) was one of five people from the Ahascragh/Caltra area who was on the ill-fated liner as they headed off to start a new life in America. But when "The Titanic" hit the iceberg only Margaret and her friend Ellie Mockler were saved as Margaret's fiancé and two other men from the parish, perished in the disaster.

The tragedy was horrific but for the closely-knit East Galway parish it was devastating. The five emigrants were widely known, all coming from large families, hoping to join other relations in the New World and make it their homes. For weeks prior to their departure families and relatives joined forces to ensure they would get a "rousing send off."

Margaret Mannion was born in the parish of Caltra on 1st November 1883 and at 22 years of age set sail for America with her fiancé Martin Gallagher, together with Thomas Kilgannon, Thomas Smyth and a friend, Ellen Mockler. The quintet had purchased their tickets in Ryan's shop in Ballygar, for the princely sum of £7.14s 9d each, but a huge amount of money in those days.

When tragedy struck, after the "Titanic" struck an iceberg, the two ladies, Margaret and Ellen were helped into a lifeboat by the three men, who the women never saw again. They unfortunately were among the nearly 1,500 who lost their lives on that fateful night.

On reaching the States, Margaret joined up with her sister Mary, and worked there for seven years while Ellen Mockler joined the Sisters of Mercy in Worcester, Massachusetts. She never returned to Ireland, and died on her 95th birthday in 1984.

In 1919, Margaret Mannion returned to Ireland, where she met and married Martin Hopkins. They lived in the village of Ahascragh, raising a family before moving to Lismany, Laurencetown, in the late fifties.

In 1963, Margaret Hopkins featured on Telefís Éireann's first ever live broadcast Television show from Hayden's Hotel, in Ballinasloe which was titled "Location." Interviewed by the late P.P. O'Reilly on the live programme, Margaret gave a graphic account of the night she lost her fiancé and two other close friends, right in front of her eyes.

"We were all so excited about starting a new life in America. I was with the man I hoped to marry. The five of us were all very close and we couldn't get over the style and luxury of "The Titanic." There were over 2,000 passengers on board and we were on D Deck (which was for third-class passengers).

"I was just going asleep on the third night when there was a thud and the engines stopped. Panic set in and as we tried to run down the corridors sailors were firing shots in the air. Lifeboats were lowered as the waters rushed in as children and women were helped onto the boats. Some

men tried to get on but were stopped by sailors. It was pure mayhem" she said.

As Margaret managed to get into the second last lifeboat she looked up and saw her betrothed saying the rosary and minute later "The Unsinkable" went down. "I will never forget the roaring and crying of the drowning men. It was heart-breaking" she recounted. After twelve bitterly cold hours at sea, Margaret and other survivors were taken on board the "Carpathia" and it was only then she saw her friend, Ellen Mockler, safe and well on board. Both reached New York safely, thanking the Lord for saving them.

Spending the last eleven years of her life in Lismany, Margaret gave many interviews to the media of her memories on that ill-fated trip. She had first-hand experience of one of the world's worst disasters and "lived to tell the tale". Naturally she still got very emotional recounting the horrific deaths that three of her close friends met. Each time she related the saga, Margaret always paused to say a silent prayer in their memory.

Ironically it was on the "Carpathia" that Margaret returned to Ireland seven years after it had rescued her from the icy waters and taken her to New York. When she died on 15th May 1970, in her 86th year, Margaret Hopkins was the last survivor of The Titanic disaster, living in Ireland. She was a remarkable woman who returned to marry and raise a family in Ireland instead of what might have been only for that enormous iceberg striking "The Unsinkable" nearly one hundred years ago.

**Recently Mattie Kilroy of Caltra has published a book dealing with the "West of Ireland Connections" on board The Titanic.**



Painting by:  
Mark James Miller

# 2nd ADA English Symposium Planned For May Bank Holiday

**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

*Encouraged from the success of the inaugural ADA Symposium last May, the organisers are looking forward to playing host again to a range of professional scholars and amateur history buffs alike in town, with the ultimate aim of establishing a leading annual spring school in honour of the town's unsung historical hero. Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th May are the key dates.*

*Dr. Ada English, as well as a leading revolutionary and one of the first female psychiatrists in the country, was a resident of Ballinasloe for nearly forty years. Organised by the District Branch of Soroptimists International, a women's advocate group, the event will feature in-depth talks on the many facets of Dr. English's life, from her role in the freedom movement, her election to the second Dáil, to her appointment as Senior RMS at St. Brigid's Hospital, Ballinasloe. The Symposium will also explore some of the wider historical footprints of the Mental Hospital and other women in the Independence movement. Some night*

*time entertainment is envisaged also where families of former employees and past staff of the Hospital can meet and reminisce. Hosted and sponsored by the Carlton Shearwater Hotel the speakers and programme will be announced in mid March. Merel Jansma, a young Dutch undergraduate of Media and Entertainment Management at the In Holland University in The Hague, is this years Co-ordinator. She was following the footsteps of her colleague Martine and is starting to pull together the programming and marketing.*

*The Soroptimists Branch have established an online presence and are currently seeking locals who have worked in the hospital, or have relatives who might remember Dr. Ada English to come forward and have their stories and memorabilia recorded. It is hoped through the Symposium to formally start recording and showcasing all the Hospital memorabilia in the community.*

*For further information about the Symposium, contact [merel@aoifeonline.com](mailto:merel@aoifeonline.com) or visit the Blog [www.adaenglishsymposium.wordpress.com](http://www.adaenglishsymposium.wordpress.com)*



Dr. Ada English



Co-ordinator  
Merel Jansma

## Ken Campbell - Marathon Man

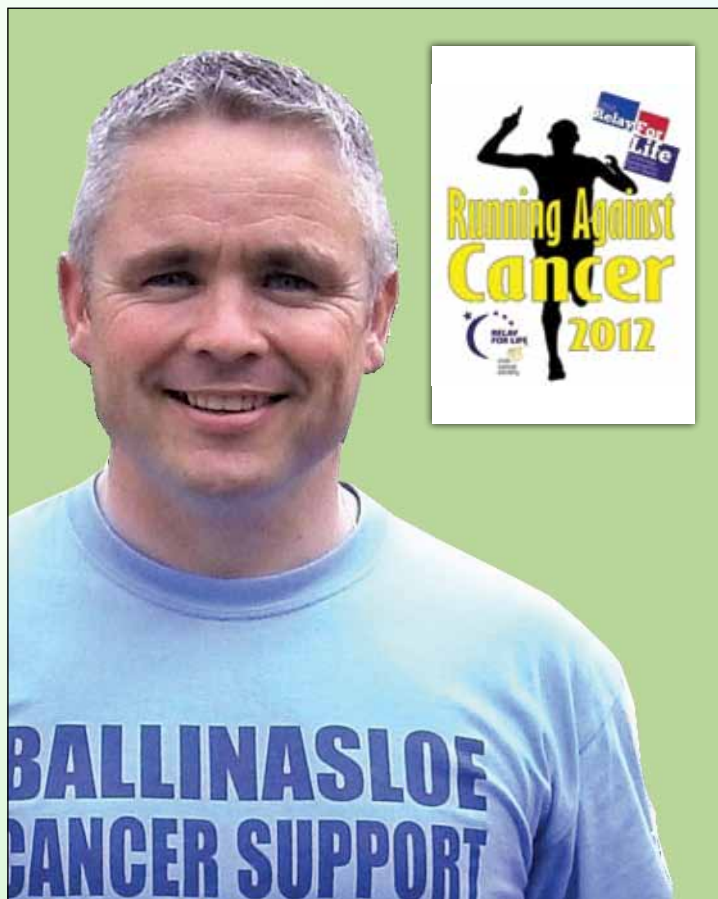
**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

*The whole concept of Running against Cancer is to simply promote and highlight cancer awareness. "I lost one of my best friends to the disease, after a short illness my friend John Rowe lost his battle with cancer and since then I have been motivated to not just raise money but more importantly to raise cancer awareness." states Ken.*

*In 2010 Ken ran his first Marathon in Dublin in Aid of the Ballinasloe Cancer Support Centre. The following year the Emerald Boxing Club continued the Running against Cancer theme when Ken entered a team into Relay for Life where members of the club covered a range of distances from 5km to a full Marathon over the 24 hours. For 2012 The Marathon Man has decided to step it up a notch and is promoting Running against Cancer 2012, as a community venture, encouraging those from around Ballinasloe who like to run regardless of their level of fitness to get involved.*

*Over the coming year the group intend on competing in a variety of different events and like in 2010 the campaign will once again culminate, when they tackle the 2012 Dublin City Marathon. But on this occasion when Ken takes to the streets of Dublin he will have the company of a few friends: Noel Lyons, Daithi Hynes, Aiden Sheridan, Enda McGrath, Danielle Tuohy, who have all decided to take up the challenge. The training sessions are held in the New Dunlo Running Track and are free, so whether you simply want to keep fit and run, a 5km here and there or if you'd like to join us in Dublin your more than welcome.*

*All you have to do is simply follow Running Against Cancer 2012 on Facebook for updates or you can contact him on 087 7654200 and remember every great journey starts with one single step.*



# Events Guide - FEBRUARY & MARCH

## 1st FEBRUARY - Wednesday

Gullane's Hotel	Ballinasloe Active Retirement AGM	3pm
An Táin	Trad Session	7pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Mike Denver	7.30pm

## 2nd FEBRUARY - Thursday

Maud Millar's	Jukebox Gypsy	10pm
Hayden's	Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm
Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am

## 3rd FEBRUARY - Friday

Maud Millar's	Live Music	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Trad Session	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Dolf	10pm

## 4th FEBRUARY - Saturday

Maud Millar's	Streetwise	10pm
An Táin	DJ Keith Geraghty	10pm
Downeys Bar	Party Night with DJ	10pm
Blakes Bar	One to One	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Trolley	11.30pm
Hayden's	Night Owls	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Chamber of Commerce Dinner Dance	8.30pm

## 5th FEBRUARY - Sunday

Dunlo Tavern	Trad Session with Still Slopín'	10pm
Maud Millar's	Skillet Pot	10pm
Downeys Bar	Sharon Turley	8pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Patrick Feeney	9.30pm

## 6th FEBRUARY - Monday

Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement Knitting Group	10.30am

## 7th FEBRUARY - Tuesday

Pearses GAA Grounds	Active Retirement Walks	10.30am
Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement	3pm
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm

## 8th FEBRUARY - Wednesday

An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Flower & Garden Club Demo	8pm

## 9th FEBRUARY - Thursday

Hayden's	Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Singers Circle	10pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am
Tesco	Music Marathon	

## 10th FEBRUARY - Friday

Dunlo Tavern	Sons of Erin	10pm
Maud Millar's	Gagen Pagens	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Keith G	10pm

## 11th FEBRUARY - Saturday

Maud Millar's	Rivulettes	10pm
Downeys Bar	Party with DJ	10pm
Hayden's	Last Man Standing	10pm
Blakes Bar	Macey South	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Darren Purtill	

## 12th FEBRUARY - Sunday

Carlton S'water Hotel	Mick Flavin	9.30pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Ceoltas Connacht Convention	1.00pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Wedding Fair. Special Guest: Franc	1-5pm
Maud Millar's	Hoppy Pop Stars	10pm
Downeys Bar	Actin' The Maggot	10pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ til late	11.30pm

## 13th FEBRUARY - Monday

Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement Knitting Group	10.30am
Enterprise Centre	Com. Vol. Org. Funding Seminar	8.30 pm

## 14th FEBRUARY - Tuesday

Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Pearses GAA Grounds	Active Retirement Walks	10.30am

## 15th FEBRUARY - Wednesday

An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	7pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Grow it Yourself	8pm

## 16th FEBRUARY - Thursday

Hayden's Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm
Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm

## 17th FEBRUARY - Friday

Gullane's Hotel	Ballinasloe Active Retirement AGM	3pm
Maud Millar's	Chill Out	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Owen Keighery	10pm

## 18th FEBRUARY - Saturday

Hayden's Hotel	Country Comfort	10pm
Maud Millar's	Keith and Jonny	10pm
Downeys Bar	Party Night with DJ	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Live Music	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	Chill Out	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Fergal D'Arcy	11.30pm

## 19th FEBRUARY - Sunday

Maud Millars	Skillet Pot	10pm
Downeys Bar	Live Music with The Mac	8pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Robert Mizzel	9.30pm
Duggan Park	M. Donnelly Interprovincial Hurling	2pm

## 20th FEBRUARY - Monday

Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement Knitting Group	10.30am
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Town Hall Theatre	BMS - Beauty and The Beast	8pm

## 21st FEBRUARY - Tuesday

Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Pearses GAA Grounds	Active Retirement Walks	10.30am
Town Hall Theatre	BMS - Beauty and The Beast	8pm

## 22nd FEBRUARY - Wednesday

An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	BMS - Beauty and The Beast	8pm

## 23rd FEBRUARY - Thursday

Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	BMS - Beauty and The Beast	8pm
Hayden's Hotel	Music with Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm
Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am

## 24th FEBRUARY - Friday

Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Music Weekend (Various)	7.30pm
Dunlo Tavern	Kiwi Paddy	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Gavin O'Toole	10pm
An Táin	Converse All-Stars	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	BMS - Beauty and The Beast	8pm

## 25th FEBRUARY - Saturday

Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Music Weekend (Various)	7.30pm
Dunlo Tavern	Samba Night	10pm
Downeys Bar	Party Night with DJ	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	The Coyles	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Ozz	11.30pm
Town Hall Theatre	BMS - Beauty and The Beast	8pm

## 26th FEBRUARY - Sunday

Golf Club	Captains Drive in	
Carlton S'water Hotel	Gerry Guthrie	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
Downeys Bar	Colin Galligan	8pm
Hayden's Hotel	One to One	10pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ till late	10pm

## 27th FEBRUARY - Monday

Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement Knitting Group	10.30am
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Gullane's Hotel	Ballinasloe Life Contributors Meeting	8.30pm
Maud Millar's	Skillet Pot	10pm

## 28th FEBRUARY - Tuesday

Pearses GAA Grounds	Active Retirement Walks	10.30am
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## 29th FEBRUARY - Wednesday

An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
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## 1st MARCH - Thursday

Town Hall Theatre	Máirtín O'Connor Band	8pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
Hayden's Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm
Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am

## 2nd MARCH - Friday

Maud Millar's	Live Music	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Eoin Quinn	10pm

## 3rd MARCH - Saturday

Maud Millars	The Rivulettes	10pm
Hayden's Hotel	Tara Shamrock	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	Macey South	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ John McHugh	11.30am

## 4th MARCH - Sunday

Maud Millars	The Skillet Pot	10pm
Downeys Bar	One 2 One	8pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ til late	10pm

## 5th MARCH - Monday

Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement Knitting Group	10.30am

## 6th MARCH - Tuesday

Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Pearses GAA Grounds	Active Retirement Walks	10.30am

## 7th MARCH - Wednesday

An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
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## 8th MARCH - Thursday

Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Singers Circle	10pm
Hayden's Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm

## 9th MARCH - Friday

Hayden's Hotel	Ballinasloe Ceoltas Race night	9pm
Maud Millars	Live Music	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	The Ramblers	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Keith G	10pm



# Events Guide - FEBRUARY & MARCH

## 10th MARCH - Saturday

Maud Millar's	Chill Out	10pm
Hayden's Hotel	Night Owls	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	Buzz the Agent	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Fergal D'Arcy	11.30pm

## 11th MARCH - Sunday

Maud Millar's	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
Hayden's Hotel	David McGuire	10pm
Downeys Bar	Dolar Daly	10pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ till late	10pm

## 12th MARCH - Monday

Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement Knitting Group	10.30am

## 13th MARCH - Tuesday

Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Pearses GAA Grounds	Active Retirement Walks	10.30am

## 14th MARCH - Wednesday

An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
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## 15th MARCH - Thursday

Hayden's Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm
Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am

## 16th MARCH - Friday

Carlton S'water Hotel	Live Music with Ken & Steve	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	One 2 One	10pm
Maud Millars	Live Music	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Dolf	10pm

## 17th MARCH - Saturday

St. Patrick's Day	Heritage Day (all over town)	12am
Canal Bar	Ireland v England 6 Nations	5pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Ceili Mor (Admission €5)	8pm
An Táin	Trad session and DJ @ 10pm	7pm
Dunlo Tavern	Kensey 3	10pm
Maud Millar's	Gagen Pagens	10pm
Hayden's Hotel	Last Man Standing	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	St. Patrick's Day EnterTainment	
Canal Bar	Live Music with Liam Doyle	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	St. Patrick's Day Party	8pm
East Nightclub	Hi Jackers	11.30pm

## 18th MARCH - Sunday

Starting @ Fair Green	St. Patrick's Day Parade	2pm
Canal Bar	Post Parade Trad session	
Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Music Dancing in Plaza suite	
Gullane's Hotel	Mothers Day Specials	
An Táin	Live Music	6pm
Downeys Bar	Paul Barns	8pm
Dunlo Tavern	Done & Dusted	10pm
Maud Millars	The Rivulettes	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	Live Band	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Byrno	11.30pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm

## 19th MARCH - Monday

An Táin	Live Music	6pm
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement Knitting Group	10.30am

## 20th MARCH - Tuesday

Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Pearses GAA Grounds	Active Retirement Walks	10.30am

## 21st MARCH - Wednesday

An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
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## 22nd MARCH - Thursday

Hayden's Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm
Maud Millars	Acoustic session	10pm
Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am
Carlton S'water Hotel	BEST Awards	7.30pm

## 23rd MARCH - Friday

Gullane's Hotel	Ballinasloe ARA Dinner Dance	
Dunlo Tavern	The Klientis	10pm
Maud Millars	Live Music	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Owen Keighery	10pm

## 24th MARCH - Saturday

Gullane's Hotel	AOIFE Community Festivals Training Day	
Hayden's Hotel	One to One	10pm
Maud Millars	Keith & Jonny	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	Tir Na Og	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Darren Purtill	11.30pm

## 25th MARCH - Sunday

Downeys Bar	Paschal Brennan	8pm
Maud Millars	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm

## 26th MARCH - Monday

Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement Knitting Group	10.30am

## 27th MARCH - Tuesday

Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Pearses GAA Grounds	Active Retirement Walks	10.30am

## 28th MARCH - Wednesday

An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
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## 29th MARCH - Thursday

Maud Millars	Acoustic session	10pm
Hayden's Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	10pm
Family Centre	Active Retirement Singing Group	10.30am

## 30th MARCH - Friday

Dunlo Tavern	Kieran Whyte	10pm
Maud Millars	Live Music	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	DJ Dolf	10pm

## 31st MARCH - Saturday

Dunlo Tavern	Buzz the Agent	10pm
Hayden's Hotel	Country Comfort	10pm
Maud Millars	Streetwise	10pm
Blakes Late Bar	Chill Out	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ John McHugh	11.30pm



(Clockwise from top left)

**Image 1: Winners of the Rainbow Art Competition from Scoil Ui Cheithearnaigh, Laurecetown NS, Creagh NS and Kilconnell NS at Ballinasloe Library recently, with Mayor of County Galway Michael Maher.**

**Image 2: Seamus O'Brien (Garbally College Principal) has his legs waxed by Brenda Frehill of B-Fab with Leaving Cert students.**

**Photo 3: Caroline Lynch of Talking Heads Saloon celebrating 20 years in business with her Staff.**



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# St. Brigid – Lá Fhéile Bhríde agus Teacht An Earraigh

Writes Pat Johnston

**What relevance has St. Brigid to Ballinasloe today? There are twenty three holy wells in Ireland dedicated to the saint yet none of these are in Co. Galway, let alone in our locality. The nearest one would be at Brideswell in Roscommon where a pattern day is held every August.**

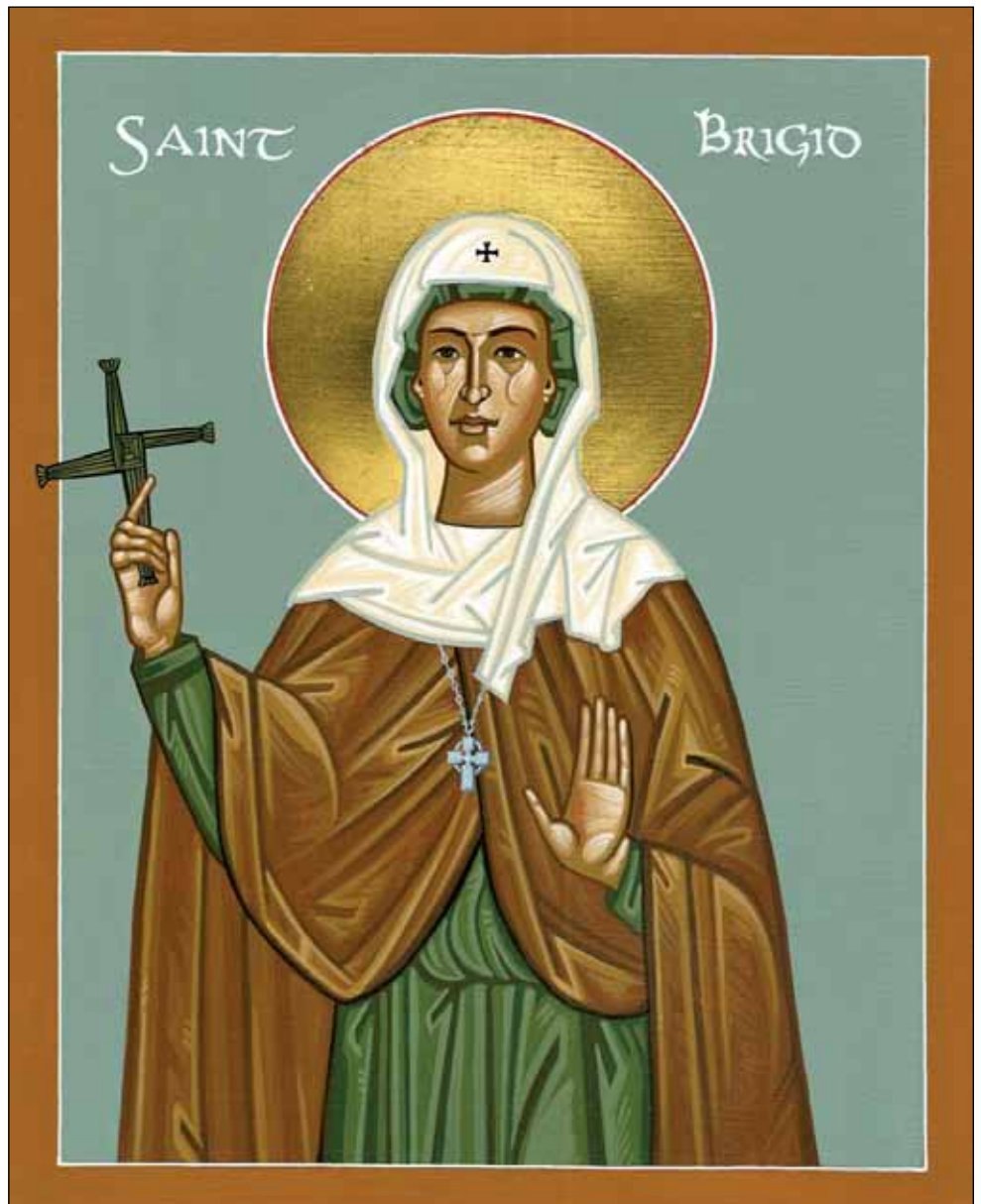
Yet our biggest and one of our oldest institutions is St. Brigid's Hospital. Formerly the Connacht District Lunatic Asylum, the name was changed to St. Brigid's Hospital in the 1960's. Why was the name chosen? Were they looking for a suitable patron they might have picked St. Dymphna who is the patroness of those concerned with mental illness. Although Irish, she is revered at Gheel, near Antwerp, in Belgium.

Of course Saint Brigid was renowned for her gift of healing too. She wove the first piece of cloth in Ireland and wove into it healing threads which kept their power for centuries. Coincidentally the mantle of Brigid of Ireland is a small square of woollen material dating around the fifth century that is kept in a reliquary in the Bruges Cathedral in Belgium. But to find out more about this person, who is in fact, with Patrick and Colmcille, one of the three patron saints of all Ireland, we have to go back way beyond the 1960's.

On February 1st in Pre-Christian Ireland the Celts celebrated *Imbolc* which refers to the lactation of the ewes, the flow of milk that heralds the return of the life-giving forces of spring. It was a time to celebrate Brigid, the Celtic goddess of inspiration, healing and smiths as well as fire and poetry, a multi-tasking woman indeed!

She is said to have had two sisters: Brigid the Physician and Brigid the Smith, but it is generally thought that all three were aspects of the one goddess. Sometimes she is described as the patron of the other vital crafts of early Celtic society: dyeing, weaving and brewing. She is closely connected with livestock and domesticated animals. She had two cattle called *Fea* and *Feimhean* who accompanied her on her travels.

When Ireland was Christianised in the fifth century the work of the goddess Brigid was passed on to Saint Brigid who was born in Faughart in Co. Louth. Defying her father's plans for her marriage she founded a monastery in Kildare. Hers



was a double monastery of men and women and there is no doubt that she exercised jurisdiction over men like St. Conleth "and they governed their church by a mutual, happy alliance." Dr. Brigid Mary Meehan, the author of a book on St. Brigid, believes that there is evidence that women in the Celtic church functioned as priests and bishops. But that's another day's work!

The twelfth century historian, Geraldis Cambrensis, wrote that a company of nuns looked after "an inextinguishable" fire at Kildare in St. Brigid's honour. Although it had been kept alight for five hundred years, it had produced no ash and men were never allowed near that fire.

A story tells of Brigid weaving a cross of rushes at the deathbed of a pagan chief who, on listening to her explanation of the meaning of the cross, asked to

be baptised. The St. Brigid's cross was hung on the kitchen wall to protect the house from fire and evil. While it is considered a Christian symbol it may well have roots in the Pre-Christian Celtic world. The crosses took shapes that are not traditionally Christian, but resemble symbols of the sun in many world cultures. Brigid, of course, was also the Light Bearer. One shape was actually not a cross at all, but a figure with three legs, recalling the three-fold nature of the goddess-saint. It is, in fact, an ancient Celtic symbol known as the triskele.

The Clare-born priest John O'Donoghue wrote in *Benedictus*: "Each year on St. Brigid's Eve my uncle made a little timber cross and nailed it to the ceiling to protect our house for the next year. On this night it was also customary to leave a piece of cloth out overnight, then take it in the next morning dripping with

dew. This is the brat Bride. It brings luck and blessing for the year.”

Around these parts rushes from the banks of the Suck were used for making St. Brigid's crosses. They had to be pulled and not cut, if the protection it promised was to work and it was important that they be pulled on the eve of the feast day. The girls made the crosses, then sprinkled them with holy water and placed them above the door, on the dresser and in the cowshed.

As a schoolchild in Kilconnell in the early 60's we were introduced to the *Brideóg* by Miss Bridie Foy. It was a kind of early experience of feminism and enterprise as she suggested that, since the boys went out on the Wren and made some cash, girls could revive the *Brideóg* for financial benefit!

The *Brideóg* was an effigy of the saint made from old pieces of material and stuffed with straw or hay. This was carried on a stick by the leader, usually a young girl, in a house to house procession. Often the *Brideóg* was made from a churn-dash covered with straw, emphasising Brigid's presence in the dairy and sometimes a young girl dressed in white represented Brigid herself. As we went to each neighbour's house we chanted: "Here's St. Brigid dressed in white, give us a penny in honour of the night!"

The "penny" received often consisted of the ingredients for baking, such as flour, eggs, sugar or currants. The girls would then set about baking some delectable cakes and buns that would be enjoyed by all at the *Spraoi*, join, time or *seisiún* in a designated house on the night of February 1st.

Brigid herself was believed to travel about the countryside, blessing the people and their livestock, and so an offering of cake or bread and butter was left outside on the window-sill for her. Sometimes they left a sheaf of corn too, as sustenance for the white cow that travelled with her, either *Fea* and *Feimhean* presumably! Or a bundle of straw or fresh rushes was laid on the threshold for her to kneel upon to bless the house. Brigid was born at sunrise while her mother was walking over a threshold, and so "was neither within nor without." In Celtic tradition this is a sacred time and a sacred place when the doors between the worlds are open and magical events can occur.

Brigid's feast on February 1st marks the emergence from winter and she is known as the Light Bearer. Replacing the pagan goddess she harnessed the light of the sun and delivered it to the hearth. A saint of regeneration and abundance, she was greatly beloved as a provider of plenty who brought forth the bounties of the natural world for the good of the people.



Perhaps now that the Celtic Tiger has destroyed much of our Celtic sites and heritage we might look again at our past and wrap *Brat Bríde* around us, asking her to restore to us prosperity or at least take us out of financial servitude.

As for St. Brigid's Hospital, I still haven't found any reliable explanation for the link with the name of Brigid but why it was chosen and whoever choose it couldn't have found a better patron. 🍀



## Hutchinson Davidson & Son Solicitors

We are saddened to announce the death of our Senior Partner, Norbert P. Colbert, who worked for this Partnership for over 50 years. He will be sadly missed. With immediate effect David C. Colbert, Solicitor, will be taking over as Managing Partner of Hutchinson Davidson & Son, Solicitors.

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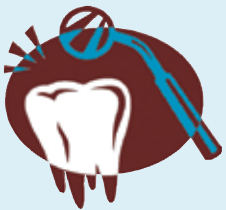
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# Ireland's 20th Oldest Person

Writes Ken Kelly

**Ballinasloe woman May Coughlan of Kilclooney is now officially the 20th oldest person alive in Ireland. Just before Christmas, May celebrated her 105th birthday with her family at her home in Kilclooney where she has lived for more than sixty years.**

This remarkable lady was born on 20th December 1906 in Culliagh, on the Shannonbridge Road and has lived through two World Wars, seen the Titanic sink, survived the 1918 Great Flu epidemic and heard stories from her father about a local hedge school.

The eldest of eight children, May Murray lost her mother when only eleven years old and with the help of her father took care of and raised her siblings. The nearest school, Cloonfad, was two miles away and the family walked there in their bare feet "from once we heard the cuckoo" said May.

Going to school during World War I, May remembers collecting eggs, with her friends, for the "wounded soldiers." All the eggs were taken to the school where Mrs. Potts (the landlord's wife) would later collect them and send them to Dublin for the recuperating soldiers.

In 1918 there was the fear of conscription and May vividly recalls the anxious talk about it among the men at the time. She also spoke of the RIC who had a barracks where Creagh Church now stands and another in Cloonfad. Officers on patrol would meet up with those of the other station regularly. The arrival of the Black and Tans instilled widespread fear in the entire locality as families huddled together in their homes, dreading a raid at any hour.

May was lucky to escape the dreaded flu epidemic of 1918/1919, which saw an estimated 20,000 lose their lives. "It was hard to believe the number of young men who passed away so quickly" said May. This brought about huge emigration resulting in several farm holdings being abandoned because there was nobody to work the land, she explained.

Displaying great stamina and alertness, the remarkable 105-year-old told of the stories passed on to her by her late father. He had told her of the "hedge school" which had been located not far from their house in Culliagh and how, as a child, he gave up his bed to the visiting schoolmaster. And May remembers being told of "The Night of the Big Wind" which took place on 6th January 1839, when



*John Coughlan presents his mother with her Birthday cake, at the family home, to mark her 105th Birthday.*

her family were too afraid to stay in the house and sought shelter outside beside the reek of turf.

"The Big Wind" was used as a marker when the old-age pensions were introduced in 1909, so that people who did not know their exact age could prove they were 70 years old. May told me "I remember a particular old neighbour who had put her case for the pension, saying that she was told she was handed out through the window to safety on the "Night of the Big Wind."

In 1939 May Murray married Bill Coughlan, who was a psychiatric nurse in St. Brigid's Hospital, in Moore Church and in 1950 they bought a farm in Kilclooney. May loved the open outdoor life, rearing fowl such as turkeys, chickens and ducks. Each Saturday she took her scores of free-range eggs to the Egg Store in Ballinasloe, which was then run by Jack and Eddie Fallon. With the cash received she then set about buying the weekly groceries on the busiest shopping day of the week in the town.

May unfortunately lost her husband in 1987 but remained an active resident in the closely-knit community. She loved to visit neighbours and friends, keep abreast of the times with her interest in radio

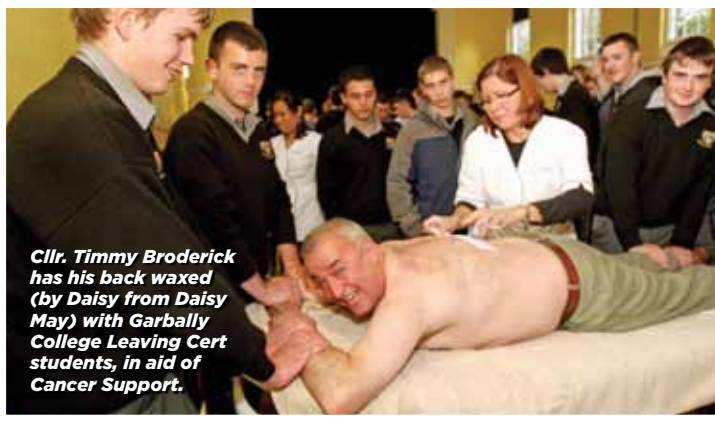
and television and up to a few months ago attended St. Michael's Church in Ballinasloe for the weekly mass.

The highly popular lady has three children Brendan (Galway), Bernadette (Dublin) and John (Kilclooney) as well as six grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren, not to mention her many nieces, nephews, relatives and friends, most of whom came to visit her on achieving such a milestone with her unique birthday.

As she sat by the range in her home, May said that looking back over a century of life "I was lucky in many ways. Life was very tough at times for everyone but we all helped one another out. I have seen many changes but Thank God I lived to see them. I had a wonderful family and neighbours which helped me along and I want to thank them all" she concluded. She was also delighted at the number of neighbours and friends that called or sent good wishes on her historic day.

Clutching her fifth Presidential Medal, May said "This medal is very special because it was given by the first Galwayman to hold the office-President Michael D. Higgins." She had already received the memento each year since reaching her 100th birthday.

# Out and About in Ballinasloe



*Cllr. Timmy Broderick has his back waxed (by Daisy from Daisy May) with Garbally College Leaving Cert students, in aid of Cancer Support.*



*Ballinasloe Credit Union Car Draw Winner: (L-R) Shane McNeill (BCU), Teresa Kilmartin (Kilmartin's Garage), Marie Haverty (Winner) and Michael Kelly (Kilmartin's Garage)*



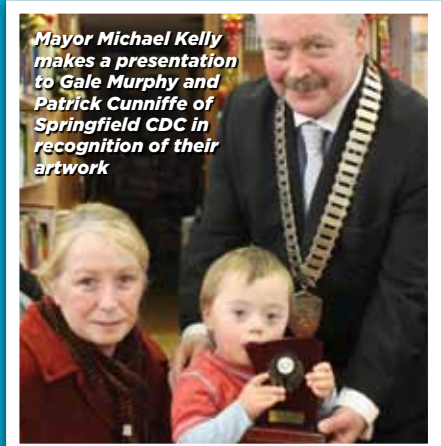
*Nathan Ward and Caolan Scully (Aughrim NS) Winners of the EU General Knowledge Quiz pictured with Mayor of County Galway Micheal 'Mogie' Maher*



*Garbally College Leaving Certs who took part in the Cancer Support Fundraising, with Grannie Lally (Teacher), Cancer Survivor Michael Day and Jacqueline Day.*



*BEST competitors from Garbally and Scoil Mhuire.*



*Mayor Michael Kelly makes a presentation to Gale Murphy and Patrick Cunniffe of Springfield CDC in recognition of their artwork*



*At Ballinasloe Social Services 25th Anniversary Celebrations were (L-R): Colm Keaveney TD, Annette Lynagh (Social Services), Elaine Murphy (Nursery School Manager), Ciarán Cannon TD, Cllr. Michael Kelly (Mayor) and Teresa Coughlan (Social Services).*



*At the recent Canal House FETAC Award Ceremony (L-R): Padraig Lawless (Canal House Chairperson), Mike Kelly (Mayor) Sen. Michael Mullins, Padraig Lyons (Canal House Co-ordinator) and Sen. Lorraine Higgins.*

# Jack and the Beanstalk Panto Proves A Winning Formula!

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Ballinasloe Panto's annual Christmas production, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, opened in the Town Hall Theatre for a weeks run prior to the Festive season and was an outstanding feat of amateur theatre.

The show was comparable to any production running in the country and delivered on all the fun, colour and imagination that Ballinasloe Panto has become renowned for.

The show opened with *Poison Ivor* played with suitable menace and a hint of irony by Fergal D'Arcy. Now considered a stalwart of Ballinasloe Panto productions, this role is a departure for Fergal and he relishes as the baddie as he succeeds in scaring the life out of cast and audience alike!

In a year of many departures for the production, 11-year-old, Marnie O'Hanlon-Carroll takes the role of the good fairy. She emanates sweetness from her opening scene and provides us with some memorable sequences particularly as she encourages Jack to follow his heart and fight for his two great loves.

The children, numbering over 120, made this a fantastic show. From the opening song, the audience were treated to a stage full of youth and vitality as the colour and energy hit the crowd like a bolt of lightning. They danced, sang and smiled right through to the final curtain leaving the audience beaming and humming songs from the show as they exited the theatre.

The principal characters, most of whom are well recognisable faces, delivered with the sharpness, timing and wit that are now synonymous with local productions. Pat Vaughan played Dame Trott with the ease and skill of an experienced performer. No audience member is spared especially if he knows you're in the crowd that night. Mike O'Reilly played opposite Pat as Dozy Den and their scenes together are particularly memorable for the sheer devilment visited upon the audience.

Jack, played competently by Enda McGrath and Princess Rose played effortlessly by Sarah Corcoran wowed the crowd with their singing especially during their duets. Mike Kelly and Declan Finn are another crowd pleasing double act as they attempt to sort out the finances and balance the books of the village. The King's patience for his not so trusted Prime Minister wears thin throughout the show especially as the faithful advisor has to contend with costume change after costume change to keep up with the jobs he's been given by the King.

The Giant and the Housekeeper, although not appearing until the second act, were well worth the wait. The Housekeeper, played famously by Eoin Quinn demonstrated his fear and loathing of the Giant with assurance as he encouraged the audience to help him put the Giant off the scent of all the gang who have just climbed up the beanstalk. Brian Derrane was wonderful as the Giant marrying terror and panic with great comedy effect.



# Rannta Beaga Poetry Launch

**Writes Pat Johnston**

Poetry lovers, Irish language enthusiasts, hurling fans and musicians got together in Gullane's Hotel, Ballinasloe recently for the launch of *Rannta Beaga* by local woman Siobhán Uí Luachra.

Launching the book, Galway hurling legend Joe Connolly said: "Is fearr beannacht amháin is tú beo ná dhá bheannacht déag is tú san uaig" - One blessing when you are alive is better than a dozen when you are dead. Joe had great praise for the structure and natural rhythm of the poetry and said that Siobhán had "ceard na filíochta" - the craft of poetry and that she should continue to write and to publish her poems. He commended Siobhán's command of the Irish language and her ability to bring to life scenes from her own childhood. Joe read his favourite poem from the collection, "Ag Crú na mBó", which is a homage to the poet's own father who Siobhán remembers sharing songs and ballads with her as they went about the daily jobs.

Interestingly, neither Joe himself nor Siobhán are natives of the Gaeltacht. Siobhán was born and reared in



Liam Loughrey, Sheila Manning, Joe Connolly and Siobhán Uí Luachra at the launch of *Rannta Beaga*.

Ahascragh and Joe Connolly was born in Castlegar, to parents who both hailed from Connemara. Their grá for the language is testament to the power of the family home in transmitting the language to the next generation. Siobhán thanked her publisher An Gúm and editor Seosamh Ó Murchú and all those present as well as her family and everybody who had sent good wishes. She said she had written her poems

because she wanted to celebrate the magic and innocence of childhood. MC Johnny Johnston introduced children from local schools who read their own choices of poem from Siobhán's collection and the launch was followed by a very enjoyable traditional music session with 'Still Slopín' and friends. The book is selling well in bookshops and is also available in Salmon's Department Store, Ballinasloe.

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# Beauty and The Beast As it's Never Been Seen Before!



**Writes Catherine McCormack**

**Ballinasloe Musical Society chose Beauty and the Beast as their 89th production way back last September. The show will run from February 20th to February 25th with a matinée on February 25th. With just a few weeks to go the Society is busy with their rehearsals and preparations for the forthcoming production.**

“The Tale as old as time, the Song as old as rhyme” is about Belle (Niamh Kelly), a girl who is dissatisfied with life in a small provincial French town. She is constantly trying to fend off the misplaced affections of the conceited Gaston (Eoin Croffy). Maurice (Brian Derrane), Belle’s father, takes a wrong turn in the woods and unknowingly tries to find refuge in the enchanted castle of the Beast (Kevin Griffin). The Beast is a prince who was placed under a spell because he could not love or show compassion. Her search for her father causes Belle and the Beast to meet. Belle views him as nothing more than a monster and he views her as difficult and stubborn. But the two soon find they can change and learn how they were both wrong.

Join us, as Belle meets the enchanted objects who bring this tale to life, with magical characters like Mrs. Potts (Sarah Corcoran), Chip (Jack Delaney/Taylor

Higgins), Lumiere (Enda McGrath), Cogsworth (Patrick Byrne), Babette (Helen O’Donoghue), Lefou (Declan Finn) and Madame de la Grande Bouche (Catherine Madden). These magical characters along with a cast of 45 others are set to bring the Town Hall Theatre to life with what promises to be the most beautiful love story ever told as it has never been seen before.

The society is delighted to welcome a very enthusiastic and talented Production Team. Majella Flanagan (Director), Alan Recks (Musical Director) and Sarah Griffin (Choreographer). On stage, Pat McGovern is Stage Manager, Dave Hardiman is Stage Director and many more – all helping to bring the show to life.

Shows are notorious for their cost and Beauty and the Beast is no exception. The estimated cost of this year’s production is €48,000. Unfortunately to date, the Society has been unsuccessful in securing a main sponsor but the show must and will go on! If you can help, please do.

Ballinasloe Musical Society’s mission is to promote, encourage and produce live Musical Theatre in the town. Society Chair Frances Leahy, thanked its many loyal Sponsors and Patrons this year and in previous years, without whom, the staging of musical theatre would not be possible. She urged the people of Ballinasloe, our audience, to support us and our Sponsors and Patrons wherever and whenever they can. She and the members are very

grateful to Tomás and Caroline Gullane and the staff of Gullane’s Hotel for their continued support in providing them with rehearsal and meeting facilities, while preparing for this show.

The Society wishes to commend those who work so hard and give their time so freely to ensure that a show is staged each year. There are so many aspects to getting a show on stage with cast members, production team, everyone who comes on board in helping front of house and back stage during the week of the show. The Society always needs help, in any form. Should you wish to help out financially or join on stage or behind the scenes or in any way you can, please contact us on **083 1085544** or Email **info@ballinasloems.ie**. Our website is at **www.ballinasloems.ie**.

This year’s show will run from 20th to 25th February nightly at 8pm in the Town Hall Theatre Ballinasloe, with a Matinee on Saturday 25th at 2pm. Tickets can be purchased during office hours at the Musical Society’s Ticket desk in the Credit Union, Main Street, Ballinasloe and the Town Hall Theatre Booking Office, (old dispensary office beside the Town Hall - now the AOIFE office). You can get further information and reserve tickets on 083 1085544. Tickets can also be bought at the front door on the night. Tickets cost €15 (adult), €10 (children), €12 (Students and OAP) and there will be a special student night rate on Tuesday 21st of only €10!!



# ‘Eric Clapton of Trad Accordion’ For Town Hall

**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

*As part of a select nationwide tour the virtuoso of Irish Traditional Accordion Máirtín O’Connor is playing the Town Hall Theatre on March 1st at 8pm. Máirtín O’Connor, Cathal Hayden and Séamie O’Dowd have been building a formidable musical relationship under the guise of the Máirtín O’Connor Band since 2001.*

*Individually recognised figureheads of the tradition, they have built solid reputations as master musicians with astounding skill, diversity and virtuosity. Together they produce a vibrant and musically charged experience that redefines one’s concept of brilliance, verging on perfection. If this musical powerhouse does not get you to your feet, nothing will.*

*Poised for the greatly anticipated release of the follow up to their ‘Crossroads’ (2009) recording the Máirtín O’Connor Band are embarking on a nationwide Irish tour starting Saturday 4th February. Coming directly from shows at Glasgow’s Celtic Connections festival the trio will be performing a selection of tunes and songs from both their highly acclaimed debut album and the upcoming release ‘Going Places.’*

*This is the first in a series of programmed events by the Town Hall Theatre Company to revitalise the venue for Trad and Folk acts. Tickets are priced at €15 or 2 for €25 if purchased in advance and can be had from the Town Hall - Tel: 090 9643780.*

# Relays Year of the Hiker is Back

**Writes Maura Hughes**

*Relays Drama Group make a welcome return to the Town Hall, Ballinasloe, with the dearly loved John B. Keane play “The Year of the Hiker” for three days in April - 12th, 13th and 14th. This play which was written in 1963 gained a major place in the Keane canon of work and has been produced continuously since. It is set in the sixties and shot through with yearning and regret for lost love. Some people consider it to be Keane at his most lyrical and tender.*

*The story revolves around the Hiker Lacey who has left the family home twenty years before. The play starts with the wedding of his only daughter and mention is made of the absent father which alerts the audience to the prospect of serious family drama to come. We are shown the effect of the abandonment on the different family members, the hurt, loneliness and shame for some with others apparently unaffected. The main characters are fully fleshed out in the course of the play which allows the audience to come out feeling really satisfied with their night at the theatre. Liam Curley of St. Brigid’s Drama Society, Relays and Moore Drama Group fame, will produce the play. Fresh from his Winter appearance in “Forgiven” Seamus Feerick will take the lead as the Hiker, a role he has always liked. He will be ably assisted in the two strong female roles by Mary Fahy-Cuddy and Alma Whyte. Declan Finn and Patrick Byrne will play the sons and other parts have to be finalised. This is a very strong cast of experienced people who have endeared themselves to the people of Ballinasloe for many a year.*

*Relays have been putting on plays in the Town Hall for over fifty years with fun and joy to all. This will be the first under the auspices of the new community management of the theatre and let us hope they will be playing for the next fifty years to continue the tradition of entertainment so loved in our town. Further Information on how to get involved and bookings, closer to the time. See you all there!*



*Legendary Playwright John B. Keane writer of The Year of The Hiker.*

# Ballinasloe RAPID Year in Review

Writes Kieran Coyne

**The RAPID Programme is a focused Government initiative to target the 51 most disadvantaged areas in the country. Ballinasloe is one of two designated RAPID areas in County Galway.**

The programme is built around seven thematic areas: Community Safety & Anti-Social Behaviour, Health, Family Support, Physical Environment, Education, Youth Support and Employment and Training.

Under the RAPID Programme it is hoped that there will be an allocation of funding in 2012 under the community support budget, for the development and support of the community and voluntary sector in the RAPID (Ballinasloe Town) area. Based on previous years, the support will be in the areas of capacity building, community events, innovative community actions, and community public relations.

Projects supported must be delivered in the current year. There is no formal application process but applicants are required to contact the RAPID Coordinator on prospective projects. If a project is eligible an applicant will then have to provide the following; Project outline, Project cost, Project timescale, Target group(s) supported and Projected local impact.

Ballinasloe RAPID Community Support & Communications Budget for 2011 covered a wide range of organisations and helped a numerous amount of people throughout the community. A total of €12,500 was invested into various groups and organisations around the town.

## Galway Co. Council Community/Voluntary Funding Schemes

### 1. Support Scheme for Community Based Economic Development 2012

This scheme offers financial support towards innovative community based economic activities especially those with the potential to create employment opportunities, or enhance economic self-sustainability in local areas and assist social inclusion. Support is available to Voluntary or Community Groups involved in the promotion of Local Economic Development. Galway Co. Council would particularly invite applications under the following themes:

- Support for Community Managed Enterprise Facilities or Services
- Support Community Events including Agricultural Shows or Events and Tourism or Recreational Festivals.

### 2. Support Scheme for Community Based Amenities and Services 2012

This scheme aims to support the improvement of community amenities and services. Projects appropriate for funding under this scheme include the improvement of community facilities, the protection or improvement of natural or man-made amenities or enhancement to the appearance of the natural/built environment. Galway County Council would be particularly interested in applications under the following themes:

- Upgrading of Community Facilities.
- Support for Community Tidy Town Initiatives.
- Initiatives, Activities or Equipment for Community benefit.
- Support of initiatives and activities to increase participation in Sport or Physical Activities.
- Support for Arts and Cultural Activities of Community/Voluntary Organisations
- Support for Arts and Cultural Activities of Professional Arts Organisations
- Support for the Heritage Activities of Community/Voluntary Organisations.

**Application form and full particulars regarding schemes 1 and 2 can be accessed on the Council's website at [www.galway.ie/en/Services](http://www.galway.ie/en/Services) and are also available by Emailing [dtully@galwaycoco.ie](mailto:dtully@galwaycoco.ie) or by calling 091 476513.**



Participants in the Ballinasloe Brothers of Charity Deerpark Horticultural Project.



Ballinasloe Country Market, Every Friday Morning in the Town Hall Theatre.

GROUP NAME	ACTION	COST
St. Grellan's, St. Anne's, St. Teresa's Residents Association	Towards support for an educational visit.	€500
Chamber of Commerce	Towards Ballinasloe Summer Festival Parade.	€1,500
Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre	Towards 6 editions of Ballinasloe Life in 2011.	€1,200
Horse Fair & Festival	Towards a Family Fun Day.	€1,250
Meadow Cross Cultural Association	Towards a community networking and open evening and the launch of <a href="http://www.ballinasloecommunity.com">www.ballinasloecommunity.com</a>	€1,260
Ballinasloe Social Club	Towards coaching pool and snooker to young males in a clean, healthy and supervised environment.	€600
Club Turas	Towards supporting an educational trip for service users of the local mental health association.	€1,000
Ballinasloe Training Workshop (Canal House)	Towards a music project and violence in relationships (a positive response) initiative.	€1,000
Brothers of Charity Ballinasloe (Deerpark Horticultural Project)	Towards supporting for horticultural plan for service users.	€1,300
Country Craft Market	Towards the promotion of the Country Craft Market.	€750
Junction Project	Towards alcohol awareness programme.	€1,000
St. Vincent de Paul	Towards St. Vincent de Paul housing initiative.	€1,058
Miscellaneous	Costs supporting the delivery of RAPID.	€82

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*Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh School Choir at St. Michael's Church for Christmas Carols*



*Nurses Reunion in Carlton Shearwater Hotel (Below). Names also apply to above photo. Back (L-R) Carmel Meehan, Mairead Kelly, Fran Mahon, Patricia Skelly, Imelda Kissane (Missing below) Mary Willis (Missing below) Middle. Eileen Kennedy, Ann Mulhern, Phil Reynolds, Mary McAndrew, Sheila Healy, Ann Cunneiffe. Front (L-R) Bernie Considine, Teresa Conroy, Ann Mulligan, Noeline Stankard, Fionnuala Scully, Mary Corrigan.*



*Deputy Ciarán Cannon recently visited Ballinasloe Social Services to help them celebrate the 25th Anniversary of their Nursery school.*



*(Right) SIPTU Members from the Ballinasloe Branch of SIPTU presented a donation to local Charities: Tuam Social Services, Ballinasloe Social Services and Ballinasloe Substance Misuse Response Group at a recent function in honour of Retired Members of the Branch. In attendance were Front (L-R): Anne Burke, Ann O'Reilly, Imelda Carty, Mary Jo Raftery, Attracta Behan, Teresa Coughlan, Joan Halpin-Hall, Imelda Tierney, Maura D'Arcy, Noreen Parker, Back (L-R): Diane Jackson, Willie Nevin, Pat Mulvihill, Johnny Walsh, Padraig Lyons and Seamus Dillon.*



*Above: Cousins Ciara Crehan, Ahascragh and Regina Ward, Ahascragh with Principal of the MOHH Hairdressing Academy, Athlone, Caroline Goode (Ballinasloe) who both received Awards for outstanding achievement.*



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# The Vintage Club Motors On!

Writes Alan Grenham

**At its first inaugural meeting held way back in July 2009, a group of enthusiastic vintage enthusiasts came together, some with only a passing interest in Vintage and others owners of cherished and exquisite vintage equipment, many of which you would be very fortunate to even get a viewing of their cherished possessions.**

This meeting followed initial phone contact made by Gerry Stronge, who subsequently became Chairman in the period to follow. It was obvious on the night that membership would range in age from Juniors at 16 to senior members who much prefer to keep their age a secret and not as many female members as the Club would like. That said, this could however change in 2012 !

Committee members were elected and Officers appointed to various positions on the night Without doubt it was now 'full steam ahead'. Very quickly the Club obtained branding with a logo/crest, stationery together with Club Signs, a limited Company had to be formed and registered. I.V.E.T.A. registration was undertaken and Insurance had to be negotiated indemnifying the Club for a sum of €6.5 million. A detailed Log was set up on members and the vintage equipment that they possessed and a constitution was formulated governing the running of the Club.

With this in place, the tasks that lay ahead were even more onerous as many had already anticipated that the Club was officially up and running, members were rearing to go, all they desired was Roads, Tar Roads, sandy back roads and lots of black smoke going in the direction of the Sky and blast the paperwork and those committees. However this did not auger too well with our Top Brass ie. The lads at the top who in the interests of all concerned quickly called things to a halt. Unfortunately, however it was back to the drawing board, hopefully for the last time. (How naïve can we be?).

Three key functions had still to be fulfilled: stewards were needed, a Safety Statement and a number of people had to be trained as Safety Officers.

Roll on the second Sunday of the Great October Fair 2009, the Club members get their first opportunity to take to the road and "Show off those highly polished and precious vintage vehicles, some spanning in age from early 1900's to late 1970". This is nostalgia at its best where



*Cllr. Dermot Connolly stalwart member of the Ballinasloe Vintage Club participating in a vintage display parade recently.*

local men viewing on the day can quite easily and unwittingly slip their age by simply saying 'I remember in 1930 when I was twenty years of age seeing that Baby Ford with Doctor Brown, or maybe a simple statement like 'that Fordson Major first came out in 1954, the year our Mickey was born.

The town was certainly taken to a standstill by slow moving vintage vehicles, some never seen before on the streets not forgetting of course the two high Nellies with the extra large women's Pink Bloomers in tow, no doubt from a vintage era also.

Many great outings were to follow in 2010 and indeed 2011 with paid up membership now reaching the 180 mark. Noted outings especially in 2010 were the Banagher/Shannonbridge run, Saint Patrick's Day outing and trips to places such as Kilconnell, Ahascragh, Aughrim and Laurencetown, not forgetting once again the October Parade. The highlight of that year took place in June which was the Static Vintage display held in the Duggan Park, Showgrounds area, a most historic event with something for all tastes, being a joint venture between The Vintage Club, The Show Society and Duggan Park .

2011 also proved to be a further year to remember with many outings of vehicles to outlying areas not forgetting the Clubs participation in Eyrecourt's Vintage Day and again the great October Fair event with the Beer Barrel throwing in Gullane's Car Park. Some of us braved the roads during the year and headed off to static events in Kilbeggan and Hollymount in our distinctive Black vintage Club gear.

This member is proud to be associated with a Club that was instrumental in moving furniture and organising supplies to help so many Families who were stranded and struggling in the treacherous floods in the recent past.

Credit is due to members who responded so well and sprung into action by going beyond the call of duty on so many nights after work.

Already a number of exciting outings and activities are planned for the Club in 2012. There is still an opportunity to join by payment of a small fee and enrolling with one of the Committee members, where you can share in the knowledge and skills of many of the members and indeed help keep many of our traditions alive and assist in passing onto our next generation. Neither does membership necessitate owning an expensive or unique Car or Tractor. There are members who have a wide range of Horse drawn equipment of years gone by or some other antiques or artifacts and many members not owning anything just genuine vintage enthusiasts. The Club acknowledges the kind gestures of two members who each donated a quantity of Club Jackets. Another member thoughtfully donated a two way radio system for the Clubs use.

Whilst it has always been accepted that the town has been synonymous with both the Horse and Horse Fair, unknown to many, the motor car has also played a significant part in our history spanning back to the late 1800's. A Club member has researched this and has discovered that the 'Father of Irish Motoring' R.J. Mecredy was born in Ballinasloe on May 18th 1861, the son of Rev. J. Mecredy, a Church of Ireland Clergyman. He was viewed with suspicion at the time as there were very few cars in the country in 1900. He founded a journal 'The Motor News'. This great Ballinasloe man was very much ahead of his time as he organised many motoring events including a run from Dublin to Killaloe in 1901. He formed the Irish Automobile Club and was known to drive a 6H.P. Daimler car himself.

***Ni neart go cur le cheile. (There is no strength without unity).***

# The Ballinasloe Snooker Club Continues to Enrich Youth

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

*Ballinasloe Social Club Billiards and Snooker is one of the oldest clubs in the town founded in 1924. Its located in the Emerald Ballroom on the second floor. The club currently caters for over 50 members. The club has a long and rich history of producing top billiards and snooker players, Mickey Murray and Johnny Riddell to name but a few. That trend is continuing with the clubs best prospects Paul Keighery and Ger McGrath representing the club at inter County League tournaments. Paul looks set to qualify for the knock out stages this year.*

*The club runs two singles snooker competitions, the Noel Mannion singles and the Joe's Bar singles, both were won by Paul Keighery late last year. The next competition is the "Willie Divilly Memorial Cup" sponsored by Divillys Off Licence. Alfie Welsh has won the competition the last three years in a row and is hot favourite to make it four.*

*"The club has a real family feel and make it their way to provide an activity and place to go for young people, keeping youngsters occupied is a real goal for the committee here." Club secretary Joby Kelly explains "Recently the club ran youth nights in conjunction with RAPID. Coaching in snooker, the rules and ethics of the game were thought to perspective new members and players. Each student who took part received a certificate, it was a great success and the 12 lads who took part got great*



*Paul Keighery coaching some young players on some potting techniques.*

*enjoyment out of it and have assured me they would be back to the club to practice and get better at the game."*

*Joby went on to explain how the club has strong connections with other clubs throughout the county and said "We hosted Tuam Snooker club, over 15 frames of snooker were played in a friendly style competition. Tuam ran out narrow winners but it was a great day, we had some refreshments afterwards and socialised. Players who hadn't seen each other in years reminisced and caught up on old times."*

*The Bailey Allen Hall in Galway City will stage snooker's Players Tour Championship Grand Finals for the first time in March. It will attract such*

*players as Ronnie O'Sullivan and Judd Trump, it will bring a welcomed boost to snooker clubs in the area. Joby concluded with, "I would just like to thank all our sponsors and everyone who contributed and supported our bucket collection around the town the week before Christmas, it's these small donations that keep the club going. If you're interested in snooker get in contact or come down to the club for a frame and become a member."*

*Annual membership is €10 per year: Open times for the club are Monday to Friday 6-10pm and Saturday to Sunday 6-8pm. A limited number of memberships for 2012 are still available, so if you're interested please don't hesitate in getting in contact either through the Facebook page or by calling 087-6317817.*

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# The Underage Hurling Scene is Alive and Well in Ballinasloe

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

**There has always been a proud tradition of hurling in the town and the club won its first senior county title back in 1951, recently this tradition is back on track with some great work being put into the youth system.**

In 2011 Ballinasloe Hurling had great success on the playing field in under age level. The club caters for 9 different age groups starting from Under 6 right up to Under 21. Some great victories were achieved by the Under 10's who won the East Galway League and the Under 13's who won their County Final by beating a much fancied Annaghdown side by 1 point in a tense game.

Club Mentor Ronan Lally states "Hurling has seen a huge increase in numbers playing on Underage teams over the last couple of years which is mainly down to the parents of players getting involved

with coaching and behind the scene's work that goes with managing teams. The popularity of hurling in the town is also due to the fact we now have our own Clubhouse, Pitch and training pitch which is Ballinalsoe GAA. These are the ingredients of success and with a good foundation of underage talent, County titles at Senior level can be become a realistic goal."

The Underage Hurling season has already commenced for 2012 with the Under 14 and Minor Teams taking part in the Suck Valley League. This is a great competition to have for preparation for the big Championship games. The Under 21 panel has commenced training in preparation for there championship which starts at the end of February.

Under 6 and 8 Hurling will start in early February with our Indoor Hurling League which takes place in Garbally Complex. This is an ideal opportunity for parents to introduce their child to the game of hurling. These games take place in a fun,

safe and structured environment where children can make new friends and start to learn how to play the most exciting team game in the world. During 2012 all of the underage teams will get to play in various competitions ie. Indoor Hurling Leagues, Go Games Hurling, Credit Union Mini All Ireland 7's Hurling, Summer Camps. The club ensures that all Children get an equal amount of time playing matches which are full of encouragement from the respective coaches over the teams. The Club welcome Parents to contact any of our coaches if they wish to find out any more information.

## Underage Coaches Contact Details:

<b>U6</b>	Des Jennings	<b>T:</b> 087 2079175
<b>U8</b>	Liam Cunningham	<b>T:</b> 087 2492713
<b>U10</b>	Brendan Hayes	<b>T:</b> 087 9073306
<b>U12</b>	Vincent Glynn	<b>T:</b> 087 9432934
<b>U13</b>	Fergus Cotton	<b>T:</b> 086 8179330
<b>U14</b>	Fergus Cotton	<b>T:</b> 086 8179330
<b>U16</b>	Ronan Lally	<b>T:</b> 087 2369665
<b>U18</b>	Fergus Cotton	<b>T:</b> 086 8179330
<b>U21</b>	Donal Tully	<b>T:</b> 086 8164581



Under 13 County Hurling Champions 2011



Summer Camp 2011 saw Tipperary All-Star Hurler Noel McGrath show some of the kids the art of taking a side line ball.



Credit Union Mini All-Ireland Under 8 team.



Indoor Hurling Under 6 Team.



Under 10 East Galway Hurling League Champions 2011



Credit Union Mini All-Ireland Under 10 team

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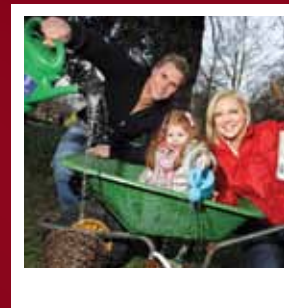
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# St. Brigid's Golfing Society

**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

*St Brigid's Hospital Golfing Society celebrates 36 years in operation and is still catering to it's members into the New Year. The Golfing Society was founded in 1975 by Jimmy Creaven, Liam Curley, Frank Dooley, Jimmy Flynn, Joe Gallagher, Marjorie King Hamill and Willie O'Rourke. They started off with modest numbers but over the years have grown and become a very successful society.*

*A total of 182 outings have been held since the creation of the society, the vast majority in Ballinasloe Golf Club. The Psychiatric Hospitals Golfing Society was founded in 1979. The Society acquired land at the back of the Nurses Home from the Western Health Board for a practice ground. It was officially opened by Mr. B. Haddigan (Hospital Administrator) and blessed by Fr. Higgins (Chaplain). A long driving competition was held in conjunction with the opening. Martin Staunton won the gents section with victory for the ladies going to Margaret Creaven. The Society developed a Pitch and Putt course at St. Joseph's.*

*A competition was held for patients and staff on the 24th September 1981. A new constitution for the Society was ratified at the Annual General Meeting held on January 7th 1985. The Society has prospered with the times. The Treasurer's Report of 1977 quoted £703 as the total income with £685 as the total expenditure for that year. Whereas the Treasurer's Report in 2007 the income was €8,260 and expenditure was €7,789.*

*St. Brigid's Golf Society have tasted many successes and victories over the years but the sweetest of all was when they last won the All-Ireland Psychiatric hospital golf championship*

*Members of the St. Brigid's Golf Society*



*in 2007 which was held in Charleville, Co. Cork. The team representing St. Brigid's Hospital Society was Willie O'Rourke (Captain), Pat Vaughan, Frank Dooley, Stephen Ruane, Jimmy Flynn, Des Loughnane and Sean Kenny. A great win for the team and Society as a whole.*

*Martin Stack (St. Brigid's Golf Society Club Secretary) stated that "Today St. Brigid's Golf Society has over 100 members consisting mainly of past and present staff. The Society holds six outings every year, five in Ballinasloe Golf Club, including a Captain's and President's Prize and one away outing. It also runs a Ladies and a Gentlemens match play competition. It's great to be part of the society, play a bit of golf and get out amongst friends and enjoy ourselves."*

## Conor Finn The Next Big Thing?

**Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh**

*Local Conor Finn has being hotly tipped as the next big thing in rugby, his attributes, skill and talent have been noticed and the athlete has achieved success at only the start of his career at 19.*

*How did you start? At the tender age of 4, in the back garden with the family. Earliest memories were that of a rugby ball in my hands. I started going up to Ballinasloe RFC and by the age of six I was playing with the Under 10's there.*

*Who Do you play for? At the moment I play for Buccaneers and I'm also with the Connacht academy. Buccs have such a focus on young talent and the Senior team is made up of some really good young guys, there are six of us who are in the academy. We're currently in Ulster Bank League Division 1B and we're going very well. With the Connacht academy it's a step up getting to train with the Connacht senior team.*

*What is your training regime? Almost every day, with 7am starts every morning apart from Sunday. Gym session 5 times a week, skills session then senior squad three times a week. We do our rehab in*



*our own time to get rid of any injuries. Tuesdays and Thursdays it's back to Athlone for Buccaneers sessions.*

*What's your favourite thing about rugby? It has to be the game itself, it's very physical and intense but you also have to use your head. With rugby union, there is a position for everyone. Being part of a team is great, something you can't*

*beat, an almost band of brothers and the friends you make are for life.*

*What position do you play? I started playing at First or Second centre, then moved to the wing. There might be a return to centre again for me in the not so distant future.*

*Do you have a family history in rugby? My Dad played rugby for Galwegians and Connacht and my brother Paddy currently plays for Galwegians and has represented Connacht. They are my two biggest inspirations, the commitment, enthusiasm and effort they have put into the game has really rubbed off on me.*

*What rugby players or other athletes do you admire? Tommy Bowe, Sonny Bill Williams and Brian O'Driscoll especially, his ability to come back from injuries and be counted as one of the best players in the world really inspired me when I was sidelined with a back injury for up to nine weeks.*

*Do you play any other sports? Well not really at the moment with rugby, but used to enjoy Gaelic football and even represented Galway, I played Hurling for Cappataggle in the past as well.*

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# Ballinasloe GAA Infrastructure Continues To Be Improved

**Writes Cathal Croffy**

The new Pitch and Clubhouse last season saw the completion of fencing and the installation of floodlights on both the main and training pitch which is a huge plus for player facilities. Great credit must go to previous Chairman Aidan McGrath and Treasurer Denis Minton who had overseen the amalgamation of hurling and football separate clubs, and new million euro plus Club Development, also to the hands on project team led by Noel Dillon, John Mitchell and Cathal Coleman.

The year in review was not successful for both Adult level of Junior Hurling and Football which saw them both exit early from their Championships. On the positive side the number of Juvenile players is growing and the number of teams increasing. What is evident is that all our teams in Hurling, Football and Ladies are becoming more competitive, testament to the solid work by various managers and coaches.

Club Membership for 2011 had a total of 647 registered members, some 324 adults and 323 youths. The growth of Ladies Football continues, the club now fielding teams from U12 to Junior level, with 80 players involved. Also Dan Moynihan was appointed Galway Minor Ladies Football manager.

Underage football is also strong with players from the club representing Galway. Noel Cotton made the Galway U15 Development Panel, Brian Shaughnessy, Eoin Moran, Eoin McCormack, Jack Parsons and Cian Dooley were on the U16 Tedd Webb panel, where Galway beat Mayo in the final. James

Shaughnessy was also selected as the Galway Minor football Captain for 2011. Eoin Stack was selected for the Galway U15 Hurling Panel and Kealan Cox picked for the minors.

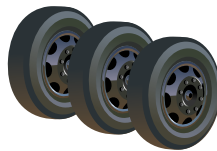
The Club Lotto continues to be the main fund raiser, delivering some €63,500. All told the Club raised €110,000 to meet it's running costs and it's capital repayment schedule, with the value of the Clubhouse and facilities estimated at €1 million. Thanks to an aggressive push for fund raising in the past few seasons, the club has reduced the total debt on the development to €210,000. Total numbers of teams in all aspects of the field games were 28. Volunteers are always welcome to maintain the pitch and clubhouse and to organise Social events.

18 months ago Martin McAleese, in conjunction with Croke Park, set up a social programme where GAA senior members were invited back to get involved. Ballinasloe together with Ballinderreen are the only 2 clubs nominated for the pilot scheme in Galway. Those who are volunteering are Sean Tully, Willie Ward, Dan Dowling and Jim Lally.

Officers Selected for Season 2012 are President Sean Keeley, Chairman Pat Sullivan, Secretary John Shaughnessy, Treasurer Stephen Ruane, Registrar Noreen Stankard, Football Chairman Willie Stankard and Hurling Chairman Jim Lally. Club Registration day is Febuary 12th in Clubhouse at 3pm, Membership €100, €50 per person and €30 for Juveniles. For further updates and information visit the official Ballinasloe GAA website: [www.ballinasloegeeaa.com](http://www.ballinasloegeeaa.com)



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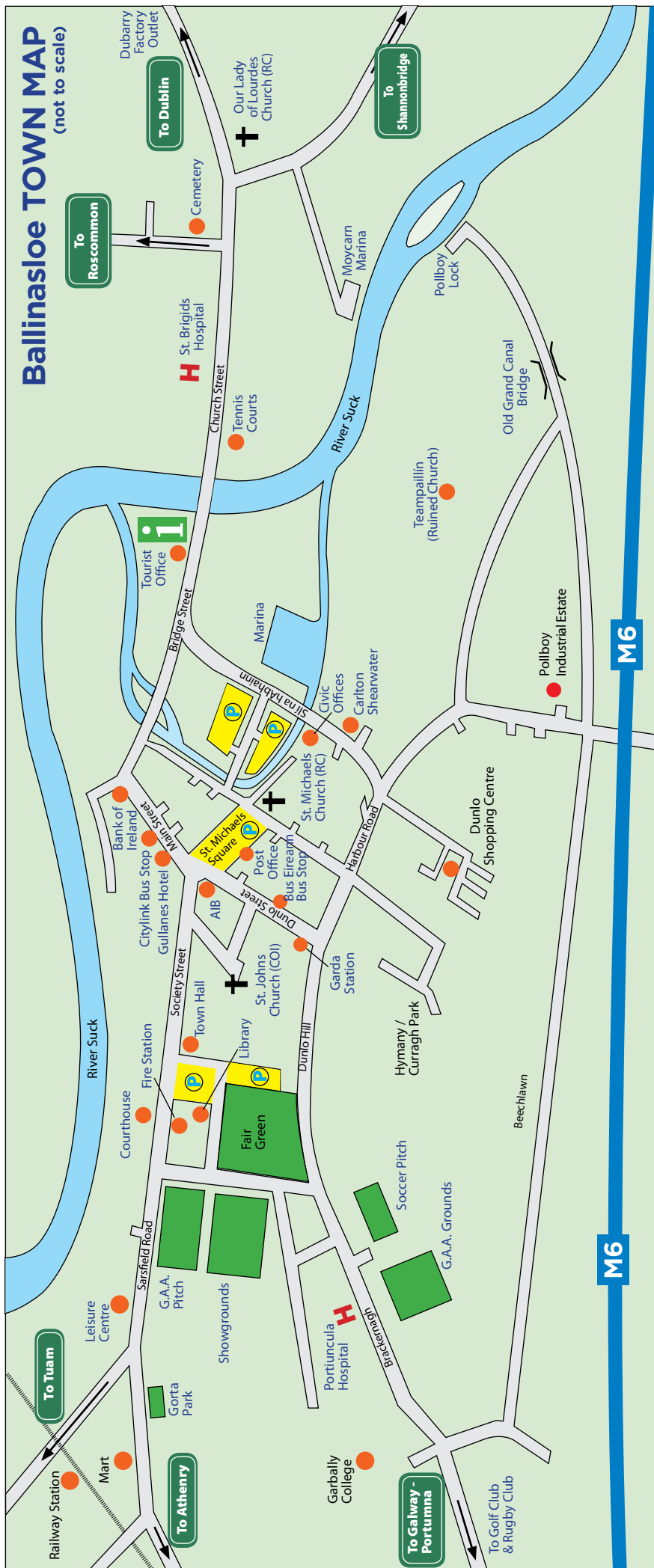
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## Slí na Sláinte

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

## Ballinasloe Line

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

## Architectural Walking Tour

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



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