



**FREE**

# BALLINASLOELIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 10 Issue 6: Feb '21 - Mar '21



60<sup>th</sup>  
EDITION

**BEIBHINN PARSONS TOP  
RUGBY WRITERS AWARD**

**PEARSE'S EGIN COLLERAN  
VICTORIOUS MINOR CAPTAIN**

**SHOWS LIFELONG REP  
VALERIE THORINGTON**



**Ballinasloe - Gateway To The West** [www.ballinasloe.ie](http://www.ballinasloe.ie)



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# REAMHRA

Welcome to Volume 10 issue 6

Welcome to our fourth edition in a pandemic lockdown and our 60th Anniversary edition at that ! Yours truly, like a lot of our readers, had a fierce quiet Christmas altogether and used a bit of the downtime to re-read all of the past 59 editions, a poignant but somewhat pleasant chore.

Tempus fugit – a decade gone in the blink of an eye. 100 years ago this Brigid's Day Captain Cornelius Murphy of Mill St. Battalion, Cork No. 2 Brigade was the first OLD IRA Volunteer to be executed in an increasingly entrenched War of Independence, while our Jack Keogh was involved in skirmishing and manoeuvres in the Midlands. Wheel forward 50 years to the 15th of Feb 1971 – D day for a younger generation when decimalised currency came in !!

This chapter – the period between the flooding and Covid, neatly bookends 12 years of which the 60 editions snug into-will be regarded as what? by historians in 50 or 100 years' time. How will the eminent Barry Lallys not even conceived, interpret from our coming and goings? Truth be told if they go to the traditional print and broadcast media they will find an uncompromisingly grim distorted view – of loss, fear, complaints, grievance, decline, political rows and the usual pepper and spice of court reports and council chamber rows. If on the other hand they revisit the online archived 60 editions of LIFE they will find a more nuanced but positive tale.

We are, I hope someway achieving what we set out to do. Worth repeating here a few lines from our first editorial - "this publication is to address the negative perceptions of our town and community, to provide a platform to assist us in understanding what is under our feet and why we still have a lot to be resilient and proud about.

This time last year the focus was on Elections, how quickly they have been forgotten. This just proves the old adage that "Eaten bread is soon forgotten", let's hope the current crisis will prove to be the case for most of us, but that is not to take from the grief and suffering some families have gone through.

What have we learned in the last twelve months?

For those with school going children they will never say a teacher's job is easy anymore. We have all discovered places of interest within 5 kilometres of home which we never visited before. We have all become more Technology efficient. Most people can work from home (some of the time anyway). We have discovered that the world has become a small place with infection even reaching the Antarctic. Elite sport has been able function without Stadiums being filled. Shelves have remained stocked with food. We have all become comfortable wearing facemasks. A&E emergency facilities appear adequate if used in the proper manner.

Crime statistics are down year on year and we have all become more aware of what is happening with our environment-an example being the level of reporting of illegal dumping substantially higher than ever before.



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**NEXT ISSUE**  
**Deadline 12<sup>th</sup> March**

For submission of articles, please email:  
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To advertise your events contact:  
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by 10<sup>th</sup> March

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It will also in time help provide investors, visitors and critically welcome new residents with an insight of what the town has to offer and what there is to see, do and visit."

Over the next few editions we will be reviewing the last decade through a few lens. I am personally pleased that so much of the history, lore and folklore of our place has been recorded here and is followed with such enthusiasm by young and not so young. It is also hugely surprising the connects the team make with families and people who have emigrated from our community and eagerly await its arrival or online publication. I am personally thrilled that LIFE has become a useful teaching aid in some of our National Schools for English, History and some Geography.

At the start we didn't want to publish Appreciations and Obits and held out for almost 12 editions but in response to our readers, they were introduced in 2013. Some 85 have been printed and I think I would have personally known at least 70 but ALL of the families and friends take solace having that precious momento shared by neighbours at home and abroad.

This Pandemic like the Floods before it will eventually recede, let's just all try and play our part. For me, undertaking this pilot project to this point, has been an ennobling and humbling adventure.

My heartfelt thanks to you all who continue to make it happen.

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



On a very positive note we have experienced a huge local community response in regard to shopping local and the use of [shopballinasloe.ie](http://shopballinasloe.ie) vouchers. It is widely reported that every €1 spent through schemes such as this generates €5 in revenue spend. What is also evident is that we also need more investment through the "Hidden Heartlands" tourism initiative in our walks and trails / Cycleways / Special Areas of Conservation to bring us up to the same level of quality experienced by Coastal areas in the Country. We have also found that the fantastic new Christmas Lights raised spirits and generated a huge positive response to our fundraising campaign (a plan which started last February).

Let's hang in there and stick to the rules as there is light at the end of the tunnel.

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



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## BUS STOP AT MARINA

BY JACK TREACY



Councillor Dermot Connolly

After years of public demand and being pushed during December's Municipal meeting, there was an agreement in principle for the installation of a new public bus stop that is to be placed in Sli na hAbhann, adjacent to the Marina.

Preparation of the documentation and reports necessary have commenced facilitating a planning application of the development to Galway County Council. It is hoped that by the end of March 2021, that the necessary documentation would be completed, and sufficient funding research will have undergone that would allow for the construction of the bus stops in question. It was a priority in the discussions that the stop would be in a space that would provide maximum accessibility to its users and the space necessary to

facilitate disability access. The bus stop was also subject to questions of town connectivity, maximum lighting and sheltering to its users. Councillor Dr Evelyn Parsons was assuring on the matter: "I am hopeful that Ballinasloe will be successfully located on the Athlone to Galway route, and I feel this area around the Marina and public car park would have scope to facilitate and promote visible connectivity within the wider East Galway."

Councillor Dermot Connolly was very satisfied when speaking on the location of the new proposed stop: "I am very happy to get this in place, I have been pushing for this for a long time and to get it accepted is a step in the right direction. Deciding on the area we looked at multiple possible locations but adjacent to the Marina was the one that ticked all the boxes in terms of accessibility, town connectivity and having proper lighting."

The Bus Stop at Portiuncula has also been referred to the National Transport Authority for consideration for improvements as part of their Bus Shelter Programme.

## SWIMMING POOL FUNDING SECURED



Councillor Dr Evelyn Parsons

Opening hours of two county Municipal pools, Tuam and Ballinasloe, have been under threat for the past few months of last year. Council Executive suggested to members that Ballinasloe Pool hours would have to be curtailed and pool/gym services reduced in the locality.

Despite calls for government intervention, no financial aid was received and Cllr. Dr Evelyn Parsons has been one of the leading

campaigners to find additional resources to help pool to remain open with normal opening hours. Galway County Council agreed to provide an additional €150,000 for both Ballinasloe and Tuam pools to further subsidise the operating costs at their final adoption of annual estimates.

Councillor Parsons welcomed the agreement from the Estimates to underpin swimming facilities in the county – "I am delighted that our Pool Management will now report to the MDA quarterly and I must commend my area colleague Councillor Timmy Broderick for his forensic work on the micro figures at the estimates and pre-budgeting meetings, which helped us all secure our objective".



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Ballinasloe Town Team are an active project group of BACD that focuses on promoting the development of Ballinasloe and its surrounding areas. They have taken another step on their exciting journey of becoming a sustainable energy community confirming that they have submitted an application to Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland for funding for an Energy Master Plan.

This will allow us to understand the energy demand and supply within the community, to find any renewable energy sources that are available within the town and to create a list of potential projects focusing on energy efficiency and renewable energy.

The EMP funding will provide the costs to hire a consultant to be able to collect local energy data that will cover



Desk study research of fuel types, energy systems that the community use and how the energy is spent. The data will be used for energy audits of local buildings and to establish a Building Energy rating baselines on homes within the town.

Statistics provided by BTT has shown that in a population of 4,545 are living in the Level Two Sustainable Energy Community. There are 2,074 houses and 1,562 cars. Spending €1,500

per year on transport and €1,900 per year on home energy, this equates to an average energy spend of €5,573,000 per year within the SEC. Town Team hope to bring this figure down with the research they have conducted through funding they have applied to SEAI.

For those looking to get involved with Ballinasloe Town Teams or looking for more information, Email Anita Killeen at. ballinasloetownteam@gmail.com

## BALLINASLOE & AREA 2030 A FORECAST?

The Board of the BACD has put together a working group to develop an action plan to make sure that the Ballinasloe and wider community residents are involved with direction of the towns' development. This plan has three main pillars which build on the strengths that have already been articulated in our detailed strategy submission to the new draft County 5 Year Development Plan, namely:

1. **HEALTH** – Objective to become the centre of excellence for health.
2. **TOURISM** – Objective to become a Tourism Hub within the Failte Ireland Hidden Heartlands
3. **SMART TOWN** – Objective – become a sustainable centre for remote working incorporating the latest available technologies.

As this will be a community wide plan, we are seeking input. If you would like to get involved to help us develop this plan, or even just want email through some ideas for consideration please get in touch at [info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie](mailto:info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie)

# GEAROID GERAGHTY & COMPANY



## SOLICITORS

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Sean Presenting ShopBallinasloe Voucher in Deli Shop

The lead up to Christmas for the ShopBallinasloe team was a remarkably busy period with the launch of the Town Voucher back in November – giving shoppers the choice to shop local in over 120 stores.

With the current lockdown, vouchers can be purchased from Dolan's Centra, Duane's Healthwise, Salmon's Department Store, J & S Photos on Society Street, when they open back up.

Alternatively, they are available online at [www.ShopBallinasloe.ie](http://www.ShopBallinasloe.ie). The vouchers come in denominations of €10, €20 and €50. €55,000 worth of vouchers have been sold so far, allowing businesses to continue to trade online even though their doors are closed allowing shoppers to browse across multiple products, services and selections and checkout in one single transaction with their order shipped from the supplier straight to their home.

So many people got behind the local initiative, opting to shop local rather than online. In addition, many of the local businesses practically supported the project by gifting Town Vouchers for their staff as recognition for their hard work throughout the year. (Dolan's Centra, Moycarn, Beechlaw, KPW Print, Ballinasloe Community Creche, Portuncula Sport Committee and Colleran's Buses, to name a few).

To date over €55,000 worth of vouchers have been purchased from all corners of the world. The vouchers are not only for Christmas, but they are also available all year round making them the ideal gift option for any occasion as well as ideal prizes for Raffles, Draws, Golf Classics and Table Quizzes. So, if you have a special occasion coming up or maybe you have a family member overseas – have them gift you some Town Vouchers.

The project is a joint initiative between local businesses marketing agency Araya Business Support Services (Honor Mitchell

Black, Niamh Creaven Connaughton) and Kickstart Web Design (Joe Glennon, David Ansley). The team are passionate about supporting local and making the town a better place to live in. They have also received tremendous support from BACD and BCU as well as gaining a new team member, Hilary O'Brien, in charge of onboarding businesses and driving the Town Voucher initiative.

Supporting local businesses and jobs has never been more important. Choosing to 'buy local' ensures the town survives. By purchasing these vouchers everyone is making a difference that benefits the community economically.

If you are a local retailer and would like to be involved, membership is now open and further information can be found on their website [www.shopballinasloe.ie](http://www.shopballinasloe.ie)



Barry Presenting ShopBallinasloe Voucher in Barry's Cycles.



Rebecca Presenting ShopBallinasloe Voucher in Wag N Tails Pet Shop.



Bridget, Kathleen, and Chris Presenting ShopBallinasloe Voucher in Dolans Centra.

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# SOCIETY ST WINDOWS SHOWCASE ART

BY JACK TREACY

An artistic group based in Ballinasloe and surrounding areas consisting of local artists Nicola Bowes, Mary Barber, Rosemary Carty, and Emel Osman teamed up with Shauna from J&S Photos on Society Street.

The team set up a themed window complete with original paintings that went on display in December. They chose a theme of 'Television Ad's from Christmas Past' as they believed that a lot of people would be nostalgic for those ads and they would add some cheer to a challenging time for everyone.

The ladies met over four years ago at a cultural night at the Enterprise Centre. There, the group met Art Teacher Lily Kelly and joined her art class. Lily Kelly had been a backbone for the group during the months of March and April, organising online meetings and given them assignments to keep them sane during the spring lockdown.

The idea goes back to January 2020 when Nicola had presented the concept to the other ladies and they all instantly were excited for the project.

Mary Barber said: "It was a great and fantastic idea that was also different." They went to Shauna Ward, manager of J&S Photos, and put their plan towards her, which she loved it and they began working on the project right away.

'Christmas Past' played well to focus on the theme of reverting to a traditional sense. The group chose four iconic Christmas Ads from the past. Nicola took on the 1991 Christmas Kellogg's, Mary picked the 1995 Coca-Cola Christmas Ad, Rosemary took the 1968 Cadbury's Milk Tray Ad, and Emel chose the 1969 coloured Bisto Ad. Despite unforeseen Covid-19 regulations Shauna and the four ladies worked tirelessly to get this project done in time for Christmas.



Iconic Christmas Ad Paintings on Display in J&S Photos Window



A photo of the 4 Artists from Left Nicola Bowes, Mary Barber, Rosemary Carty and Emel Osman

For the future, the group had plans for themes revolving around Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day. However with COVID-19 regulations at level 5 the group's progress has been stunted but they hope upon easing of restrictions that new themes can be placed on the window.

They have also focused on the production of their new range of products "MERN COBB" which comes as a combination of all the ladies' initials, and is a variety of cards available ranging from Christmas, New Years, Birthdays, Anniversaries, Weddings, and a selection of products printed from our Christmas paintings. These Mounted or Framed Prints, Cushions, Mugs, Coasters, Money Boxes, Cuddly Toys, and lots more available in J&S Photos with everything being locally produced throughout Ballinasloe.

"Working with these four ladies over the past 18 months has been an absolute pleasure. Their talent and work are second to none!! Having their work displayed within our shop and on our window always brings a smile to customers' faces. It's great to see fantastic talent within our town" states Shauna Ward.

"We would also like to thank all our customers who have supported us last year and Shauna for the dedication and work she puts in our behalf" stated Nicola Bowes.

# RECORD BUSINESS AT AN POST

BY KEN KELLY

December was the busiest month on record at An Post Delivery Services Unit in Ballinasloe. Over 3 million parcels and twice as many letters and cards were handled at the Poolboy centre where extra staff and delivery vans were brought in to cope with record volumes of mail.

Delivery Services Manager Anthony Grenham says that traditionally An Post saw an increase in parcel volumes from early December. However this year people started ordering in October which has meant to ramp up deliveries, increasing staff numbers by 20% and hiring in extra vans in addition to the 33 already in use. "We not only saw an increase in online shopping but we also saw a huge increase in packets and parcels sent to loved ones abroad who couldn't be with us, and our fellow staff based in our retail unit in St Michaels Square and our many sub offices dotted around our towns and villages were busy accepting these for posting right up until the last day for Christmas posting" explained Anthony.

Ballinasloe DSU not only covers the town and locality but delivers to over 14 thousand homes and businesses and covers a wide area which includes Portumna, Menlough, Moylough, Kilkerrin and Ballyforan.

"Our staff worked tirelessly, handling the extra volumes whilst at the same time ensuring social distancing by staggering starting times, revising our work floor set up and wearing masks, long before they became mandatory in the workplace.



"Whilst doing all this we have reduced our carbon footprint and in December we were awarded ISO 14001 and ISO 50,001 for our Environmental and energy excellence" said Manager Anthony Grenham.

Looking forward to 2021 the future looks bright (and green) for An Post Ballinasloe.



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Our office is open but operating under Covid-19 guidelines. Please call office or email to arrange consultation.

Please contact for information and advice regarding:

- Government supports
- Business plans for reopening
- Cashflow forecast for finance restructuring
- Tax advice on Wage Subsidy Scheme
- Revenue issues arising due to Covid-19 crisis.



Society St., Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, H53 FD35  
090-9642995 | info@coyleco.ie | www.coyleco.ie

Moving back to Marina Point, to a large 2,500 square foot premises – where they all began some 13 years ago, UTAH are opening a large new specialist premises over the coming weeks.

Ireland's newest fully fledged "Regatta Store" with world leading outdoor and activity brands including the iconic Dare 2 B and CRAGHOPPERS – sister brands, is Val Colleran's latest business expansion.

"We have been tracking our customers' needs and chosen lines for the past 2 years and there is a surge in demand for outdoor leisure wear of quality", explains Val, when asked why open a new retail store during the third wave of a pandemic.

"Covid has been cruel to retail, we know that however it also encouraged people to try and redirect shopping excursions to larger urban centres if they can access what they need locally or click and collect locally" he continues.

The new store will carry a vast and diverse range of outdoor leisure wear for Men, Women, Kids and footwear and boots for all. Indeed the store will remind some of us of Dublin's famous Capel Street as it will also stock a range of camping, tents, hiking and outdoor activity equipment.

The shop, along with the Mother store on Society Street, will be managed by Val, but he sees employment numbers for UTAH growing from 8 to 12 in year one across both stores.

Relocating and expanding his current outdoor section which has been a strong seller from Society St., frees up some new space that Val – (a retailer with some 30 years' experience behind him) is going to launch "UTAH Kurve", catering larger sizes for ladies.

The store will open from 9.30 am to 6.00 Mon to Sat and will be able to manage reasonable numbers in comfort even up to level 3 restrictions. Equally for those who purchased UTAH Vouchers for gifts or for Christmas pressies – they will be fully redeemable in the new store for any line.

Val, who has worked in Penneys, before moving as Senior Sales Manager in Texas with their stores in Tullamore, Mullingar and



Val Colleran at his new Regatta Store at Marina Point.

Athlone, prior to opening UTAH Dept Store in 2008 also explained that lines will be available from the UTAH website but shortly will be available from a dedicated portal [www.utahoutdoors.ie](http://www.utahoutdoors.ie).

He is looking forward to the challenge of managing two outlets in town which wouldn't be possible without the continued the support of his wife Kellie, and two children, Faolán, Eanna and his dedicated members of staff.

"Things are looking up for UTAH. Between the Big Dig and Pandemic we have had, like most of retail in town, a truly horrible 11 months but we have been hugely encouraged by the loyalty of local shoppers and families from the surrounds who voted with their wallets and feet during December and especially on line" enthuses Val.

The store will open as soon as regulations permit.

# UTOPIA

## HAIR DESIGN

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We would like to thank everyone for all the support this year. It's been challenging for everyone but we in Utopia are taking as much care and caution as possible during these crazy times.

FIND US ON : UTOPIA HAIRDESIGN

2020 was a year of change, for everyone. For the Pulse Club and its members, this change required them to cease what had developed into valued interactions.



New Window Display on Main Street Highlighting Pulse Club Activities and Community Initiatives in Ballinasloe

The club was growing well until Covid-19 halted things somewhat. They decided to focus their activities on the businesses of Ballinasloe.

Before Covid-19 Pulse's first Tuesday meetings, business pitch sessions, problem-solving and information

hunker down while offering any support that could be provided to the wider business community.

In November/December, they agreed to spend January surveying their memberships community directly. To find what 2020 brought the members in terms of challenges and opportunities. How Covid-19 has changed the directions of their businesses, and for those worst affected, how might they respond? - whether in the original business or something new that might blossom out of the disaster. They also launched their window display programme.

The Pulse Club aim to aid any budding entrepreneur with a seed of an idea, those in a start-up, those in business for a while, those who have many years of experience and going at it again.

They wish to know how they can help. Whether you are an existing member or not, send your list of problems, needs and challenges that the club might be able to help with, along with ideas, suggestions and of course, ways to improve based on experience to [thepulseclub@ballinasloeenterprise.ie](mailto:thepulseclub@ballinasloeenterprise.ie)

workshops and of course, larger events that were gaining so much traction and were improving with each event!

Covid-19 stopped all that, dead in its tracks, as it did for so many businesses, clubs, committees, and people's activities. Pulse Club had to rethink, react, and respond. So, immediately they decided that their activities should focus on all businesses and entrepreneurs in Ballinasloe, not just those who hold memberships.

The club began running well-received webinars and hoped at least to be helping the business community in some way during our first lockdown. Later in the summer when things were looking brighter, the Steering Committee gathered (remotely) to discuss what had been learned, how we might revise their offerings for the members and begin planning for a year ending high.

Then came lockdown number 2... Pause, reflect and again,

## NEW MARKETING SIGNAGE



Temporary New Signage has been installed at the top of Fair Green encouraging the community to discover what Ballinasloe has to offer.

BACD coordinated the works which were funded by Galway County Council under the Town & Village accelerated programme. The same scheme was also utilised to drive the Shop Ballinasloe town voucher scheme, the Christmas lights project and the purchase of Cafe Barriers for a number of restaurants in town to provide outdoor seating.

A total of €40,000 was provided through the scheme to support the 4 projects.



# Eimear Loughnane & Co.

## SOLICITORS



St. Michael's Square,  
Ballinasloe, Co. Galway  
& High Street, Tuam, Co Galway



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\*For contentious business a solicitor may not calculate fees or other charges on a percentage or proportion of any award or settlement.

# WORLD LEADING SANDPLAY THERAPIST

Beechlawn-based Brendan Harding was working as Consultant General Surgeon in Canada when he first travelled to Rhode Island in the US to explore a relatively new technique in Jungian Analysis called Sandplay.

"Making pictures with figurines in a tray of sand allows a person to go more deeply into their feelings than by using words alone" he explains about the process.

"Symbols are the language of the unconscious, and Sandplay is about the symbols much more than sand."

Brendan, who had experienced depression himself, found this technique very powerful and healing, so much so that he spent seven years training in Sandplay.

Having served as Chief of Surgery at the James Paton Memorial hospital in Newfoundland, he then decided it was time to move home. He took up a position as a General Surgeon in Omagh, County Tyrone, and also began working as a Therapist in the renowned Tara Centre in Omagh.

With extensive experience in Sandplay Therapy, Brendan has presented his work at international meetings from Korea to Cambridge to Vancouver. He became a teaching member of the International Society for Sandplay Therapy in 1992 and is a founding member of the Canadian Association of Sandplay Therapy.

Brendan also has a wide experience of meditation, having studied at the Ashram of Benedictine monk Bede Griffith in India 30 years ago and in the Buddhist monastery of Pema Chodron in Nova Scotia, as well as going on many retreats in monasteries in Ireland, both Buddhist and Christian. He is a

graduate of the Eckhart Tolle School of Awakening.

"Depression is a time of suffering and if handled correctly it is a time of growth", he says. "But you do not need to be depressed to get benefit from the Sandplay technique. It is also very good at identifying unconscious blocks when people find themselves in a challenging life situation".

In November Brendan's work was shown at a major conference in London (Leaders in Healthcare) organised by the British Medical Association.

He has also collaborated with local man and internationally acclaimed classical guitarist John Feeley and renowned singer Eleanor Shanley to create a presentation on Sandplay. The latest



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has been for the national arts festival, First Fortnight, an annual event which takes place every January and offers creative ways of dealing with mental health.

These presentations are available on his website alongside a more detailed description of how Sandplay works. As an experienced surgeon Brendan also uses the technique with patients who have irritable bowel syndrome. He understands both aspects of the condition.

Since he retired from Surgery he is giving more time to his practice and currently offers the process on Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions. This works extremely well for his clients.

Of the present situation he says, "there has been a lot of suffering in the world, and a lot of it not visible. We do not hear the stories of the people who have died alone, or their relatives who had to watch this happen. We do not hear about the thousands of people who have lost employment or the families put under pressure so much that the structure of relationships falls apart. Usually such suffering and death is a result of war and the aftermath is often



about repairing the damage. Perhaps after this, where there is not so much destruction, there will be a global increase in consciousness as there is for the individual after a time of suffering. There is also perhaps the benefit that governments have made more money available for health care and a society that spends money on healthcare is generally a more conscious society".

Website: [www.sandplayireland.com](http://www.sandplayireland.com)

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“Ballinasloe Says No” have been objecting to applications to operate a waste transfer station in Poolboy over the past three years. They have urged members of the public to object to this new permit due to the environmental concerns they held because of its proximity to the River Suck. More than 2,300 people had objected online to the permit along with a further 600 making submissions through their local supermarket.



Claire Kerrane, Senator Aisling Dolan and Eugene Murphy.

Dr Vincent Parsons, Chairperson of the campaign along with Senator Aisling Dolan, PRO/Secretary of the group and Councillor Dr Evelyn Parsons, have held zoom meetings with locals in East Galway on the seriously worrying impact of this development on the health and safety of over 6,500 people in the town.

“It is adjacent to the old landfill which is in danger of being disturbed. Access is through the streets and residential areas. Trucks will pass by Portiuncula University Hospital and schools. School children will be competing with 30-tonne trucks. The site is near family homes and housing estates – many with young children. These waste facilities are associated with serious health hazards” stated Dr. Vincent Parsons.

The passionate voluntary team have again been influential. Their creative volunteers put together videos to reach people through social media, organising leaflet drops with An Post as well as ads in newspapers and radio interviews.

County Councillor Dr Evelyn Parsons, put forward a motion at Plenary Council that a deputation meet with the Minister for Environment and Climate Action, regarding issues surrounding waste developments operating in areas of high flood risk, heightened environmental sensitivities and close to residential areas which was seconded by Cllr Alistair McKinstry, Green Party, Chair of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategic Policy Committee at the Council.

Cllr McKinstry informed the group that the Green Party will be also lodging a submission on these important issues.

“Chair of the SPC Cllr McKinstry, lodged a submission and Councillors in the Ballinasloe Municipal District also agreed to make a joint submission. Our residents’ health, quality of life, our environment and biodiversity in this special area need to be protected from environmental threats and we are working hard to ensure the best for the people in the area” noted Cllr. Parsons.

In a very unique move a joint Oireachtas submission had been sent to Galway County Council on January 15, by public representatives Deputy Claire Kerrane TD, Senator Eugene Murphy and Senator Aisling Dolan highlighting serious concerns they held about the application. Denis Naughten TD also independently provided his own objection.

“This is an incredible number of submissions when we consider that we couldn’t meet people or speak face to face because of lockdown, and especially when people have so much worry and anxiety with Covid-19 as well as managing with home-schooling and working from home. It’s a stressful time and the worst crisis and still, people care about the future of our town and the impact on our health and safety with this proposed development” stated Senator Dolan.

“The community are coming together and making submissions talking about the pride in their town and vision for a safe and healthy future for the next generation, which is really, really important” explained the Senator.

Follow the group on <https://www.facebook.com/BallinasloeSaysNo> or [https://www.instagram.com/ballinasloe\\_says\\_no/](https://www.instagram.com/ballinasloe_says_no/) for updates. It could be at least 10 weeks before a decision emerges.

## Thank You!

The **Ballinasloe Town Team** wishes to thank everyone that helped make this years **Christmas Lights** such a success.

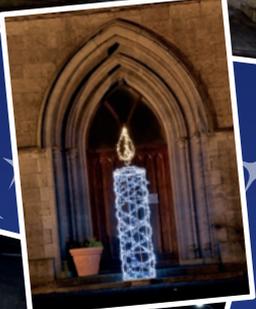
We are already planning for next years lights and events and if you have any feedback or would like to get involved contact Anita Kileen (Town Team Coordinator) at [ballinasloetownteam@gmail.com](mailto:ballinasloetownteam@gmail.com) or Lyn Donnelly (BACD Manager) at **0909646516**










## NEW SMART HUB OPENS

BY JACK TREACY

Recently a new Smart Hub store has opened on Main Street in the former ACC/Danske Bank Premises. Smart Hub opened its doors to the public back in December, its owner Syed has been a member of the community for five years.



Smart Hub Main Street Ballinasloe

Moving here from England after receiving his degree in Accounting and Financial Business, Syed came to Ballinasloe for business, moving in with a friend.

After opening his first business 'Phone Care & Repairs' on St. Michael's Square, Entrepreneur Syed expanded with a second store in Athlone. Syed is also in partnership with a small pop-up business in Eyre Square called Fonez4U.

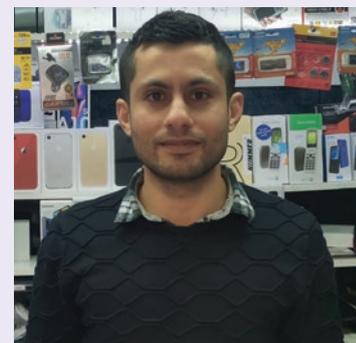
Smart Hub was opened as he wanted more space to be able to expand his business and take care of his employees. Smart Hub is open Monday to Saturday from 11 am to 6 pm with the store occasionally opening on Sundays for a few hours.

The outlet offers a variety of products and services such as the sale of mobile phones, laptops, computers and a range of smart devices. It has a range of various e-cigarette and vape juices available to their customers. Smart Hub has also begun selling Electric Scooters. Services that Smart Hub provide include phone, laptop and computer repair, all done quickly and affordably.

When asked how his service differs from his competitors Syed states: "We offer many products that some stores may not have such as our Smart TV and Electric Scooters. Other gadget stores



Mikolaj  
Sales assistant in Smart Hub



Syed  
Smart Hub Owner and Manager

only do the simple repairs such as screen repair and anything else requires it to be sent off to a third-party member which takes more time and costs more money. I do everything from my own store - all the repairs. Our shop closes at six, but I will remain here sometimes until 11 pm making sure I get my repairs completed for my customers on time. Having all the machines here makes for quicker repairs and cheaper pricing."

When talking about future developments Syed said: "There was a good response in the past month. There is uncertainty on how we can build with various COVID restrictions, hard to know, but I am currently working on making an online service available for our customers."

In dealing with Covid-19, Syed and his employees have been extra vigilant to make sure the necessary precautions are met. Smart Hub have at the door a range of sanitary products that they ask that they use at the front door. The store also asks their customers wear a mask before entering the store. The staff are also sanitising many of the hotspots within the store multiple times an hour to ensure that they are keeping themselves and their customers safe.

You can get in touch with Smart Hub through their Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Smart-Hub-108841007747689/>

Email: [Smarthub@outlook.ie](mailto:Smarthub@outlook.ie) / or through their phone number: (090) 964 4708.

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Born in Cappataggle, Ballinasloe, Bernadette Rothwell is second youngest of nine children of Bartly and Ellen Monahan. She attended Cappataggle National School followed by five years in the Loreto Boarding School, Navan.

Bernadette then trained as a nurse in the Mater Hospital, Dublin. In her time training, she recalls the excitement of her first wages, earning 13 shillings for the month! Bernadette later completed further training in Cardiff, practising in respiratory care.

She spoke fondly of her husband who she married in 1955: "When I met Alec, he lived with his parents in a beautiful home above the shops with a large garden at the back. Alec's father had greenhouses with vines, tomatoes and fruit, flowers and veg in Dunlo Street. Mrs Rothwell sold the grapes to Haslam and Mahon in Main Street. Rothwell auctioneers were established in 1896 by Edward Rothwell, Alec's grandfather."

In her younger days, the town depended very much on the farming community to support its economy. "The land leases in earlier times were for 11 months, a lot less practical than today. The October Fair was a wonderful time to show their stock for sale or exhibit them in competition and their wives their produce likewise. It was a social event that enabled surrounding villages to get together and have fun enjoying all the strangers from everywhere that visited" she recalls.

"St. Brigid's, the psychiatric hospital, provided great employment. Dubarry was ahead of their time with a lot of the workers doing the work in their own homes, just like now. Denis McCarthy from the IDA brought a lot of factories to the town which was an enormous



boost for the area" recounts Bernadette.

She worked with Alec in the auctioneering business, gaining a vast knowledge of the farming land in the area. She represented a lot of farmers in the courts, when the land commission was compulsory taking up their land to ensure they got a fair price for their estates.

Bernadette stated: "I got to know lots of families as they bought, sold, and leased their property. We managed the EBS Building Society for twenty years in Ballinasloe."

She also was very much involved with Alec in breeding rare strains of cattle and enjoyed her time showing and attending Pure Hererford events around Ireland, UK, including a trip to a World event in South Africa.

Bernadette has seen many of the wonderful facilities Ballinasloe has had on offer over the years recalling watching her children (Mary and Jane) grow up with the Irish ballet/dancing school in the Parochial

Hall, next to where they live in Dunlo Hill and able to watch many of the performances in Hayden's Hotel.

"It was a wonderful place for all the social outings which took place in the past. The town band are the new occupants of the Parochial Hall and I am so looking forward to hearing music coming from that lovely building again" she enthuses.

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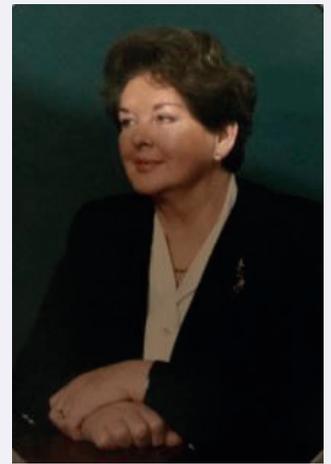


Left to Right Jean Rothwell, Bernadette, her late husband Alec and daughter Mary.

In their leisure time, Bernadette and her late husband loved cruising on the Shannon. She saw the merit of having access to Ballinasloe from the Shannon for all the tourists. This led to the couple joining the campaign to have the River Suck made navigable. They facilitated the RTÉ camera crews to broadcast the navigable part of the Suck, to highlight the blockages preventing its access for the cruisers.

Bernadette had sisters who were involved in Soroptimist groups in Dublin and Hong-Kong. Cepta Connolly was a key figure for the founding of the Soroptimist in Ballinasloe and District and came to Bernadette to get involved. "I really enjoyed my engagement with the whole movement - the mission being to improve the lives of women and girls in general, the idea that women and girls are best placed to know what is required to achieve change and empowerment".

"The Soroptimists have representation in the United Nations and various other organisations which means if there is something that requires attention regarding the fate of women, we have a say. It is a most enjoyable, educational, and social club to be part of. We organise a public speaking competition each year for secondary school girls with topics related to women's affairs. One of our local winners, Geraldine Lynagh, is now a newsreader on Virgin TV. It is great to see the future ladies speak so eloquently and with such conviction, the future of Soroptimist in the area is safe hopefully" notes the sprightly Bernadette.



Bernadette played poker with her friends as a young mother which was very sociable and enjoyable. As their lives progressed and became occupied with our families, we retired from it. After retirement, Bernadette reconnected with her friends and the group began their games anew. However, sadly one of their players, Mrs Pat Kelly, was one of the early deaths during this pandemic, whose funeral she was not permitted to attend due to restrictions.

Now in retirement, Bernadette has been given time to enjoy her nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, even with Covid-19 but has learned to face time! Bernadette holds a great interest in the world and local politics. "The news channels now are so up to date with the latest happenings it is interesting to watch them, but I do so enjoy getting my copy of Ballinasloe LIFE and going straight for Barry Lally's pieces which are always wonderful. Barry was Alec's godson" stated Bernadette.

The Soroptimists had an afternoon tea party for their oldest founder in early September last to mark Bernadette's 90th Birthday and to thank her for her huge contribution to the local movement.

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# NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS

Local couple Arthur and Deborah Carr, have received the prestigious Christine Buckley Volunteer of the Year Award 2020 for their outstanding work with Claddagh Watch Patrol and Galway East Life Support.



Deborah and Arthur are the recipients of this year's 'Christine Buckley Volunteer of the Year' award

The pair were announced as the latest winners, live on RTE radio, when Ryan Tubridy surprised the couple announcing that they had won, during an interview. The unexpected award served as a valuable reward for them and their volunteers' recent activity and achievements.

The Claddagh Watch was set up in January 2019 after five people tragically lost their lives to the Galway river in one week. The group attempts to prevent death by accident or suicide in the canals, rivers, and seas of Galway City.

Together the couple have trained almost 100 volunteers from all sorts of different backgrounds for the Claddagh watch patrol and there is not a week where the couple are not involved in the patrol venturing out and surveying the bridges and waterways of Galway City along with the other volunteers going out multiple times a week. Simultaneously, fundraising for the vital equipment that is needed to assist the volunteers in their patrols and securing a base for the crew to operate.

Along with the Claddagh watch, the couple also run a mental health support line, Galway East Life Support formed in 2013, with four pillars of Education, Prevention, Awareness and Support. Over the past seven years the GELS centre located in Cullen's Yard offer training courses, community talks and support.

GELS helpline (085) 123 7878 remains open with 75 calls being answered in 2020. Before Covid-19 the centre was open 3 days a week and all were available to call in for advice or information. Post-restrictions the group will facilitate weekly meetings in the Men's Shed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; Gamblers Anonymous on Tuesday at 8:30 pm, a weekly two art groups, a ME/Fibromyalgia support group.

To finance the operation GELS also have a charity shop named 'A New & Slightly Used' stocked with clothing, shoes, gifts, books and more stock located on the second floor of their building with plans to open the store two weekends a month.

The couple has been recognised in their voluntary efforts before with Galway East Life Support being the proud winners at the Ballinasloe Mayoral Awards in 2014. Arthur was then presented with the Social & Community Support Award at the 2015 Ballinasloe Credit Union People of the Year Awards. In 2016 Arthur scooped up Volunteer of the Year for Galway at the Cathaoirleach Community

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'Volunteer Ireland Safety & Emergencies Award 2020', 'Community Service and Social Inclusion Award', and 'Christine Buckley Volunteer of the Year Award'.

Commenting after winning the award, Deborah exclaimed: "Arthur and I would like to thank everyone that has phoned, messaged, posted liked and shared and congratulated us. The award was unexpected. We had thought that perhaps Claddagh Watch would get a nomination, which it did but we never considered ourselves. Then the Christine Buckley Volunteer of the Year award completely blew us both away. Our feet have yet to touch the ground. Whilst our names are on the 2 awards they belong to every volunteer, board member, sponsor, donor and cheerleader, past and present, that are or have ever been involved with both Claddagh Watch Patrol and GELS without them nothing would have been achieved."

Over the latest Lockdown, Claddagh Watch Patrol and Galway East Life Support are still active and ready to support whoever is in need. Volunteers that come from every background are dedicated to the cause and have been of help to save many lives since the organisations beginning.

Awards and Deborah was nominated in the Social, Community & Civic Pride category for the 2017 Credit Union People of the Year Awards.

The Christine Buckley Award comes with no less pleasure and even better. They were completely unaware to the fact that they were even up for the award, in what was an early Christmas present live on RTE Radio. Ryan presented them with a giant cheque of €1,000 for the two charities and they were also presented with an engraved trophy, some complimentary tickets to the EPIC Museum of Irish Emigration in Dublin, a painting of the Long Walk in Galway, and a framed letter from the country's president Michael D. Higgins.

CEO of Volunteer Ireland Nina Arwitz said: "Arthur and Deborah embody everything about the true volunteering spirit. They have a clear passion for helping others and dedicate so much of their free time to supporting those in crisis."



Arthur and Deborah Carr with their two awards.



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Four local people met in Staunton's Lounge to discuss the revitalisation of the Creagh Community Council, which had become defunct after many years of great work in the advancement of community interest in late October 1997.

Sadly, founding members Louis Finn, Paddy Manton and Kieren Shields have passed away while the fourth person John Molloy, remains active in the committee as chairperson of Creagh Community Development Committee.

70 people attended the inaugural meeting on the 17th of Nov 1997 in the John O'Shea Hall which elected a committee and drafted a new Constitution – approved in 1998.

A constitution was drawn up by board members and elected members of the council and the constitution pushes to initiate, support, encourage and monitor the development of the area and represent the community in dealing with statutory bodies and all other agencies in the promotion of common good, promoting the cultural and economic welfare of the whole community and to hold in trust community assets that the council may acquire and to visit agencies in the development of Creagh.

Mindful of its objectives – it was one of the founding partners in the establishing of the Ballinasloe Area Community Development in 1999 and contributed a sizeable capital grant to secure the purchase of the old St. Enda's Hospital complex and providing a nominated Director every year since.

In past years the restoration of five graveyards in Creagh Cemetery in 2013/14 was a huge undertaking by committee member John Molloy and P.J. Lenehan, and loyal fellow workers. The CCDC had seen the poor conditions that the cemetery had been placed in and was determined to restore it.

The work involved the erection of 53 fallen headstones, the restoration of 104 subsided graves and the removal of ivy from 18 headstones. The north and south graveyards were very overgrown while St. Brigid's Hospital graveyard, which had closed in 1963, had fallen into disrepair and required a lot of work. The committee had decided to place a crucifix at the east wall of the main graveyard. A very informative Heritage Display Unit, containing a short history



1997 Creagh Community Development Council Committee *Front Row (left to right):* Florrie Glennon, Louis Finn (secretary), John Molloy (chairman), Mary Craughwell (treasurer), Mary Duignan. *Second row:* Noel Dolan, Seamus McHugh, John Doherty, Eamon Noone, PJ Lenehan, Sean Kelly. *Back Row:* Frank Nevin, Kieren Shields, Paddy Collierhan, Dominic Divilly, Sean Craughwell.

of each graveyard, was located at the entrance gate so that visitors could more easily find graves of their loved ones.

The cemetery has been maintained since 2013 by John Molloy, PJ Lenehan and Owen Flynn, a project that demands many hours of dedicated service. The monetary contribution by the people of the parish to the annual cemetery collection in later years is vital to ensuring the proper maintenance of Creagh Cemetery since 2013.

Creagh Paths Project that had been pushed for five years is finalising to fruition when Creagh Council were successful in their application for €100,000 available through the Town & Village Renewal Scheme in 2019. To qualify for the grant, the Community Council were more than obliged to contribute to the scheme in which they paid €12,500 which was matched by Roscommon County Council.

The Council's representations to Roscommon and Galway County



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Councils have resulted in the recent installation of desperately needed footpaths and lighting and have gotten in Anthony Cunnane Builders Ltd for the job. Creagh Community Development Council and Roscommon County Council are paying for the sections that stretch from Dubarry – Dolans Centra – Ardcaran Roundabout by the Shannonbridge Road and Galway County Council have financed the rest. These footpaths and lighting have contributed immensely to a safe walkway for walkers, joggers, pushchair and wheelchair users. The Community Council have pledged that they will continue to ensure that footpaths will be cleared of litter and debris, especially of fallen leaves in the autumn.

Chairman John Molloy acknowledges their close cooperation with all public representatives. "Our Community Council gives their special thanks to Ex-Senator Maura Hopkins and the teams at Roscommon County and County Galway and her local Secretary Alan Harney, who were instrumental in delivering this project" states John.

Despite strong representations to HSE and local politicians over the past 10 years regarding the rapid deterioration of St. Brigid's Hospital, no substantial progress has been made to date.

Creagh Council has advocated the removal of all the additional buildings to the original building; then the impressive front building and the New Building at the northern end of the Compound and the accompanying ground should be put up for sale as one entity. Likewise, the site of the delapidated Nurses' Home and attached lands could form a separate sales unit.

CCDC has envisaged it becoming a gated compound comprising of a village concept that would include many different facilities. They believe it would be an attractive prospect to retired people, as is the case in England, America and Australia. Sadly, there appears to be little interest in HSE West becoming actively involved in progressing matters.

They hope to kick off a new project in Spring in which they will push to repair a section of the Bog Walk between Dubarry Factory and

Attycorry. This is a beautiful facility all the year round but one small section needs attention, the Council also will make other necessary repairs to the Walk.

The Development Council will clean the Suck Bridge walls which have been reported as an eyesore by the public. The CCDC is confident that the completion of the footpath and adding lighting to Beagh roundabout will happen in 2021 and Creagh Council is in a good position to be able to contribute to the refurbishment of Beagh roundabout.

As with most voluntary organisations, the committee needs an infusion of younger people who are willing to give of their time to improving their community environment. Creagh Council's policy of keeping Creagh clean and green requires constant attention, something that only can be achieved by the support of every household in the community. Together, the community can succeed. Chair can be contacted via email [john\\_molloy44@hotmail.com](mailto:john_molloy44@hotmail.com)



John Molloy, Owen Flynn and P.J. Lenehan clearing fallen leaves from footpaths in Creagh



Don't forget to enter our new **CROSSWORD** page 30 and **WIN** a **€50 Voucher**

# LET'S TALK BUSINESS



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Orange the World

The local Soroptimists Branch, as part of worldwide organisation, collaborated with the United Nations in an international campaign to highlight domestic violence against women and girls.

Change will only come about by raising public awareness on violence against women and girls. With their recent Orange the

World campaign, which spread over 16 days from late November to December 10, members of the club safely gathered at Marina Road, placing a banner to raise awareness and end gender-based violence.

The colour orange was chosen to catch the eye of those passing by while it also symbolises a brighter future without violence. It shows solidarity in eliminating all forms of violence. The banner was placed on Marina Road by Former National President of Soroptimists International, Maria Finnegan and Ballinasloe Soroptimist member Mary Courtney.

Myrnrne Kelly current President said "One in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence worldwide. I believe our role is to focus on prevention through education. Equality starting in the home, our schools and the workplace. We as a group need to need to continue to strive to raise awareness and work to improve services for the survivors of violence in any situation."

They also produced a video with Detective Inspector Declan Rock, which highlighted that from January 1, 2020, to November 30, 2020, the local Gardai had 10 prosecutions for victims of domestic violence. Worryingly in 2020 - 109 reports of domestic violence in Ballinasloe represent a 28% from the year before.

The video was aired on the LIFE fbook page and had a huge 4,000 reach and was viewed by nearly 1,000 folks.

Soroptimist Ballinasloe and nationally are calling on the government to plan a new national strategy based on the startling facts that are being presented and collected by the Garda, and others.

Throughout the ORANGE campaign, they wish through working



Banner Placed on Marina Rd. by Former National President of Soroptimists International Maria Finnegan and Ballinasloe Soroptimist member Mary Courtney.

together to improve the services available to survivors of domestic violence They urge those who are experiencing domestic violence to not sit there in silence but to reach out to various groups and agencies.

During Covid-19 the social diary of the Soroptimists had to be planned very carefully with 25-year anniversary celebrations that was to be marked by a town-wide tree planting being cancelled. A planned Gala Charity Concert fell by the wayside also. For celebrations instead a Covid-19 friendly afternoon tea party was held.

Earlier in the year the Soroptimists had an environmental protection project given Climate Ambassador status by An Taisce. A partnership with the National Women's Council has enabled them to progress on their advocacy for rural women particularly in relation to public transport.

Their National Public Speaking competition for secondary school girls was successfully managed once again by Kathleen Croffy, as one of the group's aims focuses on a commitment to developing leadership in girls. A bursary provided to support girls starting 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Education was greatly appreciated by recipients in Ard Scoil Mhuire.

The group continues to support girls who are interested in progressing opportunities in their chosen areas and those seeking to join are more than welcome. Get in touch via Siballasloe21@gmail.com

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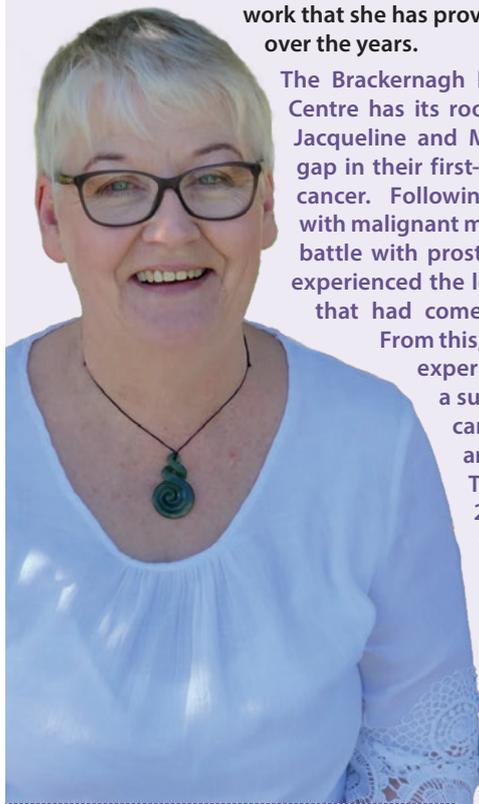
SUNDAY  
04.00 pm - 09.00 pm

# Laura Brennan Award Winner

BY JACK TREACY

East Galway Midlands Cancer Support Centre's Director of Services, Jacqueline Daly, became the third recipient of the Laura Brennan Award for her Advocacy work for cancer patients.

Jacqueline becomes the first person in the West to have received this award, with only Laura Brennan who this award is in remembrance of, and Joan Moore being the second recipient. The Ballinasloe native was awarded the accolade by The Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology after the incredible work that she has provided to cancer patients over the years.



Jacqueline Daly third recipient of Laura Brennan Award

The Brackernagh based Cancer Support Centre has its roots back in 2009 when Jacqueline and Michael Daly noticed a gap in their first-hand experiences with cancer. Following Jacqueline's battle with malignant melanoma and Michael's battle with prostate cancer, the couple experienced the loneliness and isolation that had come with such diagnosis.

From this, the family shared their experiences and established a support group to aid and care for cancer patients and their families. Today, they have over 200 patients attending weekly with an army of volunteers all doing their part to support them. Their services are offered free of charge.

Jacqueline stated that she is "absolutely chuffed" that she is the third recipient of the award after

the incredible work that she provided to cancer patients. The award was named in remembrance of the prominent HPV vaccine campaigner who unfortunately passed away in 2019 from cervical cancer at the age of 26. It recognises outstanding contribution or achievement in areas of patient advocacy and research.

Jacqueline spoke of the accolade and dedicated it to Laura's work saying "It is an incredible honour to accept this award and to continue Laura Brennan's legacy of advocacy. Laura is a huge inspiration to me, and she will always be my hero. She was and still is a huge champion for women everywhere."

Speaking how they are operating during Covid-19 Jacqueline states "We've found a way to make it work. You can't start to support people and then pull the rug from under them. Mental health is going to be the big casualty of this. At the end of the day, people need people."

Jacqueline has been pivotal to ensuring that the support centre remains active during Covid-19. Their group provides counselling over the phone or over zoom with the group expanding from one counsellor last year to now having five.

The group have moved all their support systems online and hold a one-way system in their building complete with a sanitation set for their therapy rooms. With fewer people coming into the centre, Jacqueline's work has been pivotal in keeping their clients informed and supported throughout the pandemic. They provided services such as bringing patients to their radiotherapy appointments however due to COVID-19 they have been restricted in what they can do.

Jacqueline always acknowledges the role of the wider community. "Amazingly, people have continued to fundraise for us, they have been very creative during these times" states Jackie.



Laura Brennan Award

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Once again the Community Council of Moore published their 46th edition of *The Moore News*, a yearbook that is packed with reports, stories and photos of everything that has happened in the area last year. It is still available in most local shops and Moore's Community Office at Moore Hall for €10.

Moore Community Council's main project are the renovations of Moore Community Hall. The much used and loved Moore Hall, has in the past, played a significant role in bringing people together for all sorts of events, dances and parties down over the years.

Moore PRO Valerie Duffy says: "We also know that there have been several marriages as a direct result of these meetings in Moore! If the walls of the Hall could talk, there would be some serious stories to tell!"

The cost of the renovation work will come to approximately €200,000, financed through three grants from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development - Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014 - 2020; from the Just Transition Fund; and the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht under the Cultural Capital Scheme 2019 - 2022—totalling €129,989.72. The Council are very appreciate of those who ran social media campaigns and fundraised over €35,000 with the rest was matched by MCC locally.

The renovation work is expected to be completed by September of 2021. Although work is stalled, the active Committee is still hopeful as restrictions lessen,

they can complete the work within this timeframe.

The renovations will bring about an enhanced, fully accessible community facility in Moore and Clonfad, including two new training rooms and a new digital network hub.

Moore CC have expanded the Hall allowing for bigger events to take place in the future. The renovations will provide opportunities for all age groups through community education, learning and strengthening the communications and co-operation of the community. Through enhanced insulation, they have been able to reduce energy dependence and enhanced sustainability in the use of resources. All these welcome modern additions to the facility will focus on a safer and more inviting environment to all.

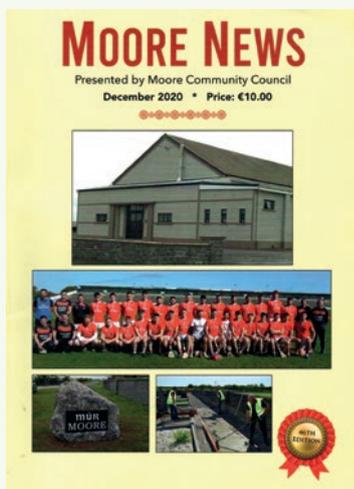
During level five Covid-19 restrictions Moore's Community Office has had to close. However, in previous months Moore has been providing support on printing letters and emails and the collection of news for Moore News. Moore CC has also been vital to members of

the community who have been cocooning during Covid-19. A community WhatsApp group has been set up to share community information and Moore has been involved in a Roscommon County Council and Garda initiative, supporting those who have been isolating during the lockdowns.

In the future, Moore Community Office plan to take advantage of communication tools and members have held their meetings online via Zoom. "If everything goes to plan, we will have Moore Hall open in September 2021 amid great fanfare. We are celebrating 70 years this year of the first official opening of the landmark. It would be so great if we could mark that collectively as a community this year" concludes an enthusiastic Valerie.

Get in touch with Moore Community Council Via their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/moorecommunityoffice> /Email: [Moorecc3@gmail.com](mailto:Moorecc3@gmail.com) / Phone: (090) 967 3538

You can also still donate to their Go Fund Me at Fundraiser by Moore Community Council: Moore Community Hall Refurbishment ([gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com))



Moore News Cover 2020



Volunteers Removing Old Step of Moore Community Hall

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# AHASCRAUGH'S NEW POETRY TRAIL

BY JACK TREACY

Due to Covid-19, the plans of Ahascragh village were put on hold with the annual village Fair Day having to be cancelled. However the Ahascragh Development Association sought to implement something for the streetscape that people could enjoy even under Covid-19 restrictions.

Similar to other small Galway and Roscommon places, many derelict buildings adorn the village and the Ahascragh Development Association devised a plan to give the village a face-lift all while bringing some culture to the community.

The idea came about when Secretary of the group, Margaret Smyth, drove through another Irish town and saw images of famous poets such as WB Yeats, Seamus Heaney and James Joyce and many more accompanied with a couple of lines of their poetry.

In love with the idea, Margaret discussed the plan of implementing it in their village suggesting the use of Ahascragh's very own local poet Michael Glynn's poems for the trail. Michael had recently published a book of poetry entitled "The Man with the Cap" and after discussing the plan with Mike he was very enthusiastic about it and willing to allow the Committee to use his verse around town free of charge.

Poems selected were ones that had



Mike Glynn and wife Catherine pictured on poetry trail.

relevance to the area such as "Leaving Killure", "The Old School", and "The Rambling House" among the six poems that were selected.

ADA went to company Signs & Systems Ballinasloe to get the poems printed and implemented an excellent stained glass effect put in as a background to the poetry. The poems have been given pride of place by an old garage in the village. The project was paid for by a grant supplied by the LCDC Community Enhancement programme.



Mike Glynn's poem placed on the window of a derelict building.

"We are getting phenomenal feedback to this project and most of the poems have a local connection" states Sec. Margaret.

The poetry has gathered attention from people outside the village with many coming to experience the trail. This included Councillor Dr Evelyn Parsons, who after experiencing the poetry trail turned on the village's Christmas tree lights in a busy weekend for the Development Association

The poem was only the start of Ahascragh Development Association's plans to tackle the problem of derelict buildings. They have also placed artwork in the windows of other derelict buildings as part of their enhancement project with images of flowers and fields being put throughout the town.

Ahascragh hopes to add more artwork to the village over the next few months adding more culture for residents and visitors to enjoy.

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# €120,000 NEW CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

BY COLM CROFFY

The last time such a positive reaction was witnessed by so many people to the erection of the annual illuminations was at the Millennium. James Burke was Treasurer of then Chamber of Commerce. "The amount of people back then who stopped me in the street to say well done was huge, the number of people who loved the new Central European Wooden Tree in the square was positive, but this years reaction has been off the Richter scale" enthuses James, who was again the Business Liaison Officer on the project.



Shane McNeill Business Development Manager BCU, Linda Feeney Operations Manager BCU with Seamus Duffy (BACD) at the presentation of €4,000 sponsorship to the lights.

Val Colleran, UTAH Proprietor, was typical of most in business "the amount of families who got into cars from villages and parishes – Mountbellew, Killimor, Shannonbridge even New Inn, drove to town and got out with their kids to walk around and enjoy the lights and get their photos taken was unreal, the footfall into our new streets and town centre was huge this December and anything that does that must be supported and encouraged" stated Val.

Manager of BACD and Co – Ordinator to the Lights Project Lyn Donnelly has been overwhelmed with the amounts of cards, emails, letters, texts that she received both from the general public, but especially those in business who have had a particular tough year.

Anita Tuohy, Town Team Coordinator, was effusive in praise for what she saw was a determined community effort to mark Christmas. "Everyone got behind the community fundraising for this project because we could all see the feel good value of it, our new streets deserved new lighting and our project team working and meeting since last February have really proved to all of us – how a united approach to a common need – properly explained can get results."

Tina Kelly, The Hair Gallery, "These lights are the best. The Tree is just A1, lights absolute magic. So many people are talking about how lovely and magical the town is. Cheers to those who have made this happen."

Tomas Gullane, Gullane's Hotel. "It's uplifting to get such a positive reaction from our customers when we in the hospitality face another lockdown. Congratulations and well done to all who succeeded in making this Christmas operation so successful."

Sean Connolly Butchers: "Very well done by all. The Snowman outside my shop must be the most photographed in Ireland. Thanks to James and Liam and everyone else involved" Sean Connolly.

The Business Community helped fundraise, between their direct Cash Contributions and doing ticket sales in their premises, over 51% ie €14,500, with the Community Team of Ticket Sellers and online sales making up the balance of €28,322 the promoters funds for the project. Cllr Evelyn Parsons donated €1,000 from her County Council Training and Seminar allowance and Christmas

week the Committee got a huge shock when Tom McKeon of McKeons' Sand and Gravel called to sponsor €1,000 towards the costs.

In our tables produced in the Report we have indicated the number of books of tickets sold by the Businesses into Gold, Silver and Bronze, with Bronze being at least 2 books, Silver 3-6 books and Gold 7 plus.

We also list the names of our Community Raffle Sellers who did trojan work in getting locals and workers to support, especially Therese Dillon and Caroline Layng who between them sold over €3,000 worth of tickets! Tickets were bought on line by a lot of Ex Pats overseas – Canada, USA, UK, UAE, Thailand & Australia; by Ballinasloe folk who couldn't make it home but enjoyed seeing the images posted up by so many families and friends as well as the online Video Campaign which had nearly 80,000 viewers – including the final LIVE lucky dip draw with the Town Band on The Square, which was watched by 9,000 people!

The surplus generated will be used by the project team towards next year's running costs with plans already in motion for next year's fundraiser, which will hopefully allow the group to expand the lights project again.

Seamus Duffy, Chair of the BACD stated "All of us involved with to thank the 10 sponsors of the local firms who gave such significant prizes, all the volunteers, all who contributed and sold tickets and especially to Liam Kenny, Matt Kenny, Enda McGrath & James Kenny who put the new challenging set up and down."

The Lights Committee / Town Team Project Group were Anita Killeen, Ahmed Mukhtar, Aisling Dolan, Carmel Grealy, Claire Healy, Colm Croffy, Emma Moynihan, Jacinta Divilly, James Burke, Julie Sheridan, Liam Kenny, Renate Kohlman, Seamus Duffy, Shane McNeill, & Val Colleran.

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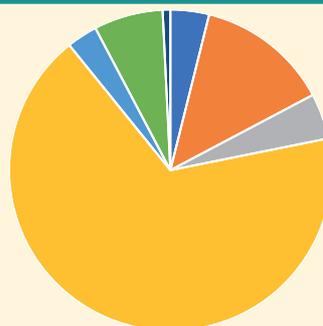
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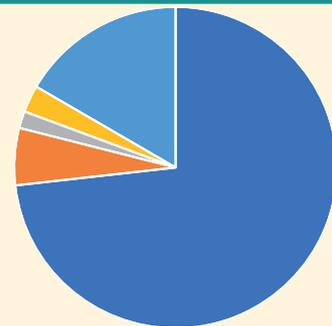
### INCOME (TOTAL: €129,793.65)



- Online Raffle Sales
- Cash Raffle Sales
- Business Contributions
- GRD/LEADER
- Ballinasloe Credit Union
- Cllr Evelyn Parsons
- Galway County Council: Town & Villiage Scheme

INCOME	
Online Raffle Sales	€5,032.50
Cash Raffle Sales	€17,340.00
Business Contributions	€5,950.00
GRD/LEADER	€87,471.15
Ballinasloe Credit Union	€4,000.00
Galway County Council: Town & Villiage Scheme	€9,000
Cllr Evelyn Parsons	€1,000

### EXPENDITURE (TOTAL: €122,633.12)



- Purchase of Lights
- Insurance/Electricity
- Storage Costs
- Installation/Repairs
- Raffle Costs

Investment for 2021: + €7,160.53

EXPENDITURE	
Purchase of Lights	€89,795.20
Storage Costs	€7,047.84
Raffle Costs	€2,093.02
Insurance/Electricity	€3,337.56
Installation/Repairs	€20,359.50



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- ★ Bruen Bros & Co
- ★ The Compliance Team
- ★ Coyle & Co Accountants
- ★ Creggsstone
- ★ Delaney's Furniture
- ★ Duane's Healthwise Pharmacy
- ★ Emmet House Dental Practice
- ★ Euro 2
- ★ First Stop barbers
- ★ Georoid Geraghty Solicitors
- ★ Goodes Dry Cleaners
- ★ Gullanes Hotel
- ★ The Hair Gallery
- ★ Jack Duncan & Company Solicitor
- ★ John Murray Ltd
- ★ Jorenas Health & Gift Shop
- ★ Joseph Jordan Solicitor
- ★ Kariba's Restaurant & Coffee House
- ★ Leahys Life Pharmacy
- ★ Mc Gorisks Pharmacy
- ★ McKeon's Sand & Gravel
- ★ Michael McCullagh Auctioneer
- ★ Mighty Cabs Taxi & Bus Hire
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- ★ Mulvey's Fruit & Veg
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- ★ Sean Connolly Butchers
- ★ The Bread Basket
- ★ The Compliance Team
- ★ The Craft Room
- ★ Utah Department Store
- ★ Utopia Hair Design

**SILVER**

- ★ An Post
- ★ Ashtree Stores
- ★ Ballinasloe Credit Union
- ★ Ballinasloe Glass
- ★ Bank of Ireland
- ★ Bawnmore Enterprises
- ★ Cahalan Jewellers
- ★ Carry Out Off Licence
- ★ Civic Offices
- ★ Clarkes of Ballinasloe
- ★ Domac Tool & Plant Hire
- ★ Dunlo Medical Centre
- ★ Eimear Loughnane & Co Solicitors
- ★ Emmett House Dental Practice
- ★ First Stop Barbers
- ★ Fletchers Expert Electrical
- ★ Footsteps Chiropody
- ★ Fred Kilmartin Ltd
- ★ Gadget Tech
- ★ Gerry Strong Photography
- ★ Goodes Dry Cleaners
- ★ Grenhams Off Licence
- ★ Gullanes Hotel & Conference Centre
- ★ J&S Photos
- ★ Joe Ward Menswear
- ★ Joes Bar
- ★ Jorena Health & Gift Shop
- ★ Joseph Jordan Solicitors
- ★ Kathleen's Fashions
- ★ Keller's Travel & Hardware
- ★ KPW Design & Print
- ★ Liddys Euro Spar

- ★ Marina Downey
- ★ New Ireland Insurance Seamus Duffy
- ★ Noonan & Cuddy Solicitors
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- ★ Paddy Keane Auctioneers
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- ★ Sky Blue Counselling
- ★ T Mullen Construction Ltd
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- ★ The Deli Store
- ★ The Front Room
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- ★ Matt Carey & Associates
- ★ Murphy's Medical Hall
- ★ Newton Fuel Oil
- ★ Niall Hogan Menswear
- ★ Nico's Takeaway
- ★ O Connors Food hall
- ★ O Reilly Business Services
- ★ Ollie Colohans & Sons
- ★ Peter Madden Fuels
- ★ Pharma Project Consultancy
- ★ Shuul Colours
- ★ Tiny Tots Creche & Montessori
- ★ Tomas Barbers
- ★ Tony Carroll Butchers
- ★ Valerie Dolan
- ★ Vals Vintage Cupboard
- ★ Woods & Co

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

- ◆ Karen Campbell
- ◆ Ann Marie Brennan De Courcy
- ◆ Therese Dillion
- ◆ Dan Dowling
- ◆ John Flynn
- ◆ Kathleen Fogarty
- ◆ Carol Glynn
- ◆ Ken Kelly
- ◆ Caroline Layng

**WINNERS**

Marie Treacy	3 day family Break, Shearwater Hotel
Zsolt Ference	Dubarry Tweed Jacket & Galway boots RRP €900
Tess Geraghty	500 Ltrs Home Heating Oil from Corrib Oil
Gerry Croffy	€500 SO Hotel Group Voucher (Pat & Una McDonagh)
Linda Sweeney	€500 Utah Department Store Voucher

Micheal Jnr O' Neill	€250 Dillon's Tyres Voucher
Nicola Colleran	500 Ltrs Home Heating Oil from Garbally Oil
Paul Moran	€250 Supervalu Voucher
Mary Naughton	€1,000 Shop Ballinasloe Voucher
Molly Kelly	€250 Hogarty's Flooring & DIY Voucher

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# NEW CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SUCCESS



The Town Outdoor Crib was erected in its new location in the Square this year after a years absence with the Big Dig. When the nuns left their Convent in 2005 their large ornate figurines, were bequeathed to the town for an outdoor crib.

The late Patsy Geraghty organised to have a timber manger built for the crib set by the St. Bridgid's Hospital staff . Some co-workers and family took to the erection and storage of the set since.

The Geraghty family have been Custodians to the crib and Monsignor Cathal in Loughrea had sadly in the past had to replace and repair broken or stolen statues of his own accord over the years.

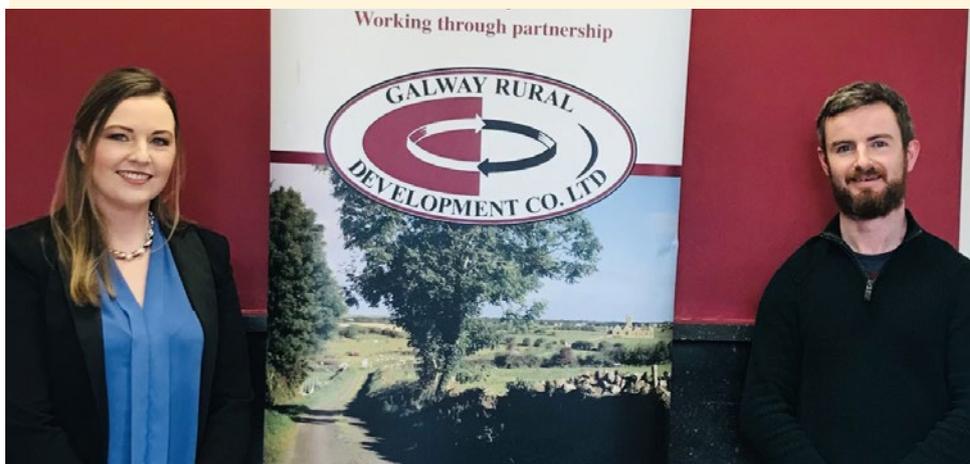
The Christmas Light Committee and the Custodians worked together to find a suitable position safely in the heart of town on the market square to remind us all of the essence of the Nativity, in its new setting.



This years bauble installers were Cian & James Burke, Ben Feehilly , Danny & Charlie Killeen , who between them fixed some 500 red baubles to the new tree by hand !!



Congratulations to the team for the amazing Christmas Lights. In particular the beautiful Snowman in front of East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support, who we christened Snowy The Snowman. In what was a very strange year for everyone, we came to work every morning with the big smile on our faces, not only to see the beautiful Snowy the Snowman, but to see the joy on the faces of so many who stopped by to take photographs. There were family photographs, selfies and a lot of very strange poses which often made us laugh out loud. We cannot wait to see Snowy again in December" Jacqueline Daly, EGM Cancer Support



Claire Conroy and Conor Carty, LEADER staff of GRD, who rolled out the LEADER 2014-2020 programme for East Galway, which was one of the main funders of the Lights project in Ballinasloe, providing € 87,471 grant aid

## A COVID - 19 CHRISTMAS



We asked readers to send festive shots in of their family at the Tree in the Square and this one was the most poignant of all .

Mary Finnerty 84 years young and a long time resident of St Grellans spent all of her Christmas cocooning in her own place and only got to see her wonderful 40 grandchildren through her window – like so many others during this pandemic.

The photo was submitted by her grandson Charlie Finnerty who writes " this photo says all about the times we are going through and that we all love her so much x".



Shona, Leah & Alex Kearney from Abbeyknockmoy



Lally family



Cameron and Zoe Clareay



Mc Cullaghs at Tree



Summer and Alex Dowd



Ned Ward



Huban Family

# CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR RESIDENTS



In December the children of 3rd and 4th class Scoil Bhríde, New Inn, Ballinasloe embarked on a very special project, making Christmas cards for the residents of Ballinderry Nursing Home in Kilconnell. The children worked extremely hard to make cards for each of the residents and included a lovely letter full of chat and news and the hope that the residents would be remembered by Santa Claus too.

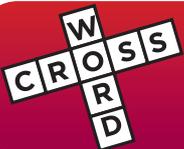
The children realise what a lonely time it has been for all nursing home residents and so in order to let the residents of Ballinderry know that they were thinking of them they included a virtual hug in every card.

The cards were lovingly decorated and only when the children were completely satisfied were they packed up and delivered to the nursing home.

The surprise for the children arrived just before the Christmas holidays; a very special card arrived in the post from Ballinderry Nursing Home. Mrs. Davis, the class teacher, read it out to the children, all the staff and the residents were so thankful to the children for their cards and thoughts and the card sat proudly on the teacher's desk for all to see.



BY CATRIONA DONOHUE



Are you a Crossword “**A D D I C T**”?

Then see page 30 and you could **win €50.**

## HUTCHINSON DAVIDSON Solicitors



Elaine Bannerton  
B.A. LLB.

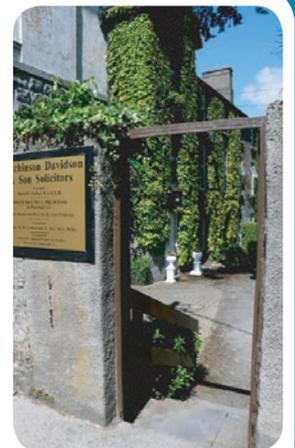
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Four years ago St. Augustine's School in Clontuskert, took part in the Climate Action Project, following the visit of the former Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Richard Bruton, to the school.

The Clontuskert School's latest project saw the installation of solar panels on the school's roof, in partnership with Microsoft Ireland, SSE Airtricity and Active8. Since the panels have been installed they have generated 42% of the electricity in the school. Software tools, installed at the school, aggregate and analyse real-time data on energy generated by the solar panels, demonstrating a mechanism to achieve sustainability goals and reduce the carbon footprint of the electric power grid.

The students even received a letter from President Michael D. Higgins, encouraging them to keep up the good work and said "The pupils of St. Augustine's are such young citizens and I would like to thank you for your commitment to working together, to explore the many ways in which we can address the critical challenge of climate change."

St. Augustine's School Principal, Kate Murray, acknowledged the dedication and innovation of the team of teachers in Clontuskert.



Clontuskert students in front of the newly-installed solar panels at the school.  
L to R: Euan Kelly, Owen Gilchrist, Harry Campbell, Rian Winters, Aidan Frehill, Lucy Dolan, Katelyn Culleton, Fionn Kelly, Amy Lyons, Lydia Whyte, Ava Whyte, Christopher Ward, Caitlin Naughten, Aoife McDonagh, Adam Colohan, Jayden Kane, Oran Kane, Joseph Darcy and Katie Cannon.

"Our wonderful staff are constantly creating varied learning opportunities for our students, ensuring that they become independent 21st century thinkers, students who will know the power of one small action to bring about collective change. The geography and science community in Galway and Ireland has been extremely generous in sharing their expertise and even during lockdown our virtual classes connected with Dr. Anne Dolan of MIC, Univ. of Limerick and Padraic Creedon and Dr. Noirin Burke of Galway Atlantaquaria, to learn about issue on land and in our oceans."

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# OUT AND ABOUT

## NEW REPORTER

20 year old Jack Treacy, a Shannon native of County Clare has been appointed the 19<sup>th</sup> official LIFE Reporter.

Jack is the second eldest of a family of 3 boys and the youngest, a girl, is a distinguished past pupil of both St. Conaire's NS and St. Patrick's Comprehensive, Shannon.

Jack is attending the University of Limerick – a second year, studying a Digital Communications Degree with History.

When not heading for long walks and treks he is a passionate Reds - Liverpool FC – life-long supporter, knowing all the squad players of the Anfield Club.

One could also find him in his downtime moments enjoying his collection of YouTube videos from his favourite creators or chatting online with his friends!

He is looking forward to meeting and working with all the volunteers and groups connected with LIFE and the Development Company.

Jack takes over from fellow Bannerman - Liam Cosgrove (who returns to his degree course at U.L.). Liam gave us a wonderful 9 months of his traineeship on the magazine and we thank him and wish him every success in his future career.

Jack will be working on the next four editions of the Magazine and developing the online content as reporter and principal videographer. We wish him well.



## 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY



On a snowy morning in Whitehall church, Drumcondra, on Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1961 Thomas W Sheridan (aka Tommy) & Eilish Conway were wed and celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary recently.

Tommy also turned 80 on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, but the party was put on ice.

They ran the very successful Sheridan stores on the Market Square for over 40 years.

They also owned the renowned Jeckyl & Hyde lounge bar which was an establishment way ahead of its time, in glamour and service.

The couple were also mentors to 6 other business that their children were and are involved.

Tommy was the President of the Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce and served on the board of the Ballinasloe Vintners Association and they are both staunch supporters of their adopted town.

Eilish is his right hand woman and together they reared 8 children, 5 girls and 3 boys. David, Mark, Julie, Gemma, Cindy, Gillian, Jennifer and Aiden. Sadly Mark passed away in 2017, gone but never forgotten.

They have 18 grandchildren & 14 great grandchildren.



Karribas Restaurant and Coffee House gave a massive thank you to everyone who donated to the Anna Ward Fundraiser for 'Tomorrow for Tomás'. An unbelievable €6004.48 was raised. Anna is so appreciative

of all your good wishes and donations. She hopes that it will help Tomás in some small way as he plans the renovations to his home in 2021 that will allow him greater independence in his home environment.

# Join our Production Team at Zimmer Biomet in Oranmore



ZIMMER BIOMET  
Your progress. Our promise.®

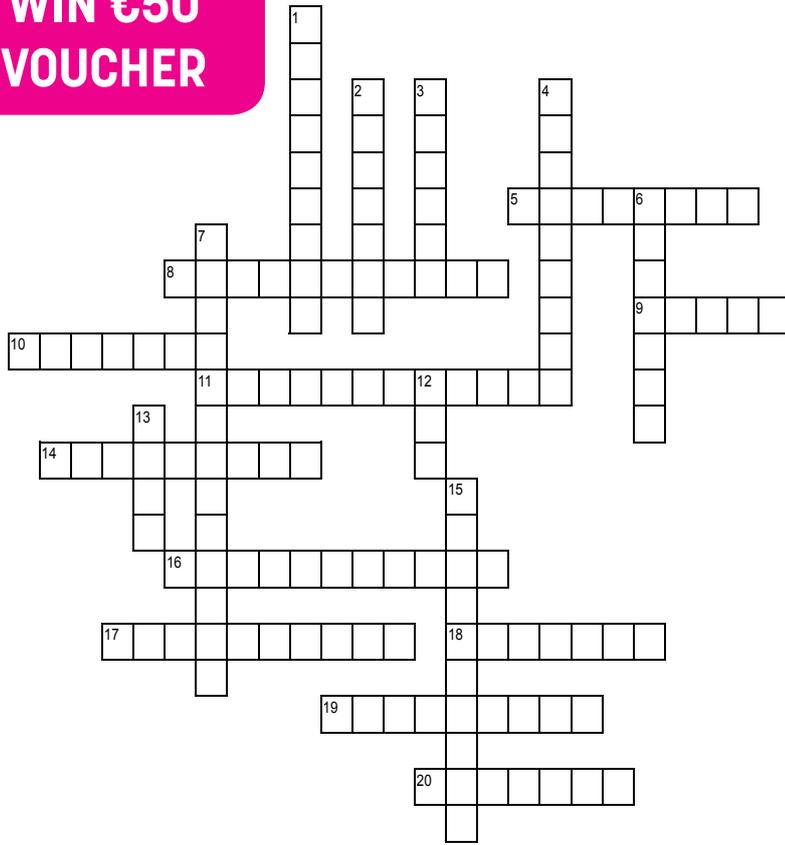
This dynamic, fast-paced facility is a global leader in musculoskeletal healthcare, producing artificial hips, knees and joints at Zimmer Biomet in Galway.

We want to hear from motivated team players with a track record of delivery. Manufacturing or trade experience an advantage but not essential as full training is provided.

This is an opportunity to develop your career in a leading multinational. For more detail call Emma on 091 452444 or email your CV to Eileen Kelly at [ekelly@careerwise.ie](mailto:ekelly@careerwise.ie)



**WIN €50  
VOUCHER**



### Across

- 5 Former Politician and Football Referee, Patsy (8)
- 8 Loyal Galway GAA Fan (7, 4)
- 9 Creagh Former Champion Cyclist, Tom (5)
- 10 Famous Battle in \_\_\_\_\_ in 1691 (7)
- 11 Community Games Chairperson (6, 6)
- 14 Former dead animal factory in Poolboy (9)
- 16 1950's Dunlo St. Bar and Restaurant (3, 8)
- 17 No. 10 on Galway's 3-in-a-row All-Ireland team (5, 5)
- 18 Our Lady of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, Creagh (7)
- 19 Brackernagh Football Teams (3, 6)
- 20 3 Generations of \_\_\_\_\_ Family worked in AIB

### Down

- 1 Town Band's New Hall, The \_\_\_\_\_ (9)
- 2 Fishing Ford on the River Suck (7)
- 3 Famous Kilconnell Lake, Lough (6)
- 4 Last Mayor of Town Council (4, 5)
- 6 C of I Rector, Rev. John (7)
- 7 Former Ireland Rugby Captain (3, 10)
- 12 The \_\_\_\_\_ Bridge, close to Railway Station (3)
- 13 M.J. \_\_\_\_\_ Flaherty (4)
- 15 Last Coachbuilder in Society St. (4, 6)

**Completed Crossword (or a photocopy) to be returned not later than March 1st, to CROSSWORD, C/o Ballinasloe Life, BACD Office, Creagh, Ballinasloe.**

Name..... Mobile:.....

Address.....

Winner will be drawn from correct entries and receive a €50 Voucher from KPW Print, Poolboy, T & C apply.

### Answers to Crossword 103:

Across: 3-Aonach, 5-The Hut, 6-Breezy, 7-The Hill, 9-Beegans, 10-Grellans, 13-Whist Drives, 16-Mattie Ganly, 17-Joe Higgins.

Down: 1-Barge, 2-Whigham, 4-Duignan, 5-Tull, 6-Buddy, 8-Bullies Acre, 10-Fire, 12-Six, 14-Lee, 15-Clog.

The winner was: ADAM DORAN, KILBEGLEY, BALLINASLOE, who is the winner of a Cooper Hurling Helmet.

## THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER...

BY KEVIN KAVANAGH

**ALPHO O'REILLY**, the former RTE production designer, who mysteriously disappeared 25 years ago, lived in Dunlo Hill, Ballinasloe in his schooldays. The Westport born Alphi later moved to Dublin and had a house in Sandymount before his disappearance in January 1996. He remains on the Garda missing persons file and are anxious to trace his relatives.

**BALLINASLOE SONGSTRESS** Michelle Lally had a big Christmas success with her song "Old Galway Town." The music for the song was provided by Ciaran Cannon TD. Michelle was formerly a member of De Dannan and performed all over the world.

**THE GREAT OCTOBER FAIR** was mentioned several times by presenter Hector, on TG4, during his series of tours throughout the Southern states of the USA. He recalled the annual fair in Ballinasloe at rodeos in Texas and Arizona. During filming in Mississippi he met a Bishop whose mother came from Mountbellew. He told Hector her name was Bellew.

**The Galway to Athlone Cycleway** will complete the circa 270km car-free corridor between Galway and Dublin for cyclists and walkers with Ballinasloe in the final process of three of the five possible routes that have been outlined. A final public consultation has begun - uploaded to the project's website where you can share your opinion on best possible routing until March 5. [www.GalwaytoAthlonecycleway.com](http://www.GalwaytoAthlonecycleway.com)

**FLOORING PORTER'S** success in winning the Christmas Hurdle at Leopardstown brought great delight to a Ballinasloe syndicate comprised of Kerrill Creaven, father and son Tommy and Alan Sweeney, and Edward Hogarty, who forked out €10,000 to supplement their horse for the Grade One race, run over the Christmas Festival.

**CALTRA LADIES'** footballers are looking for a senior team manager. Applicants can contact 086 0543688 or send an email to [caltracuans.galway@lgfa.ie](mailto:caltracuans.galway@lgfa.ie)



Vol. 1 • Issue 1  
Front Cover  
April / May 2011



Vol. 2 • Issue 4  
St. Brendan's Residents  
October / November 2012



Vol. 3 • Issue 1  
GAA 2013 All-Ireland  
April / May 2013



Vol. 5 • Issue 1  
Garbally Rugby  
April / May 2015



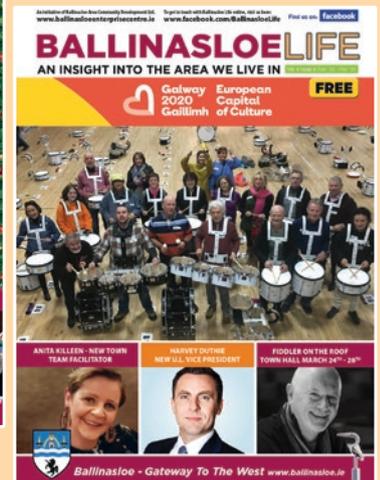
Vol. 7 • Issue 1  
Garbally Rugby  
April / May 2017



Vol. 8 • Issue 1  
Garbally 46<sup>th</sup> Connacht Title  
October / November 2018



Vol. 9 • Issue 5  
People of the Year Award  
December 2017 / January 2018



Vol. 9 • Issue 6  
Drummers  
February / March 2020



Vol. 10 • Issue 1  
Current 60<sup>th</sup> Cover  
February / March 2020

*Celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition with 6 pages of a look back which will happen with different elements of the next few Editions we have just included our first and current Covers here with those special times that local groups made the front cover. So many of our covers tend to be landscape or building or event in aspect; when we get a worthy moment to celebrate - it must be noteworthy. These are some of our stand out covers in the past decade.*

Special thanks to our local Creative Designer / Photographer Robert Riddell for providing over 95% of our covers

## THE GENESIS OF A COMMUNITY LIFE

It was the winter of 2010 the austerity years post the banking collapse were taking its toll. We had as a community a short 12 months before lived through the most devastating of floods; there was a genuine sense of despondency in the air.

The Printing family MD (Brendan Kelly)– lifelong supporters of so many voluntary organisations in town, our development Company founding Secretary (Colm Croffy) and BACD Chairman (Seamus Duffy) had a few chats over the festive season.

No one in the community could see at a glance outside of the Patrick's Day Parade and the Fair that there was huge voluntary, sporting, charitable, educational work happening allied to a shook but loyal business community and a rich farming hinterland under our feet.

We were only looking at a quarterly newsletter 8 pages, dropped into the home via An Post. One of the key drivers to the BACD company - Noel Madden mentioned at an AGM that the wider community of town would never understand what BACD was trying to do unless it took its message outside the old gates of St Enda's and into people's minds and homes.

I started researching other communities, Gort had its Guaire, Tuam had its historical Annual but we had nothing. I had been previously engaged with the Connacht Tribune for a decade since Dermot Connolly (Ex NT, RIP) passed as the local correspondent and that paper like so many others was changing from Broadsheet to tabloid and staff reporters who could cover topics in depth were being let go. With the bones of an idea we approached a few of the pillar firms in town – would they back the idea of a simple 32 page colour magazine – every 8 weeks, with their advertising budget to become not a "MAGILL" or a "Village" type publication for our community but more like a "Cara" the inflight magazine of Aer Lingus.

The response was overwhelmingly positive, we needed the Mother Ship of Development Company to be the nursery for the project. Resources to compile, research, coordinate the magazine would have to be found. Third level Trainees was the only route as the cost recovery project could not pay out any professional fees to contributors.

My projects office would be the engine room for content and creativity and my 20 years of communications across print, multi-media and events would be put to use. The BACD manager's office was the accounts and advertising office.

Seamus went with a trio of a team to the Board, it was backed enthusiastically from the start. The wily Board however added a fourth person to the Volunteers & Manager – Director Paul Hargadon. So it was four volunteers – who sold the ads, (Seamus was the Master Hustler !) got the subscribers, the then Manager Helen Kelly who did the billing and accounts chasing and mise, who co – ordinated content and contributors.

Distribution into all the letter boxes inside the old Urban area was always done with voluntary drivers – Directors and members of the



Pictured at the launch in February 2011 were  
Back (L-R): Brendan Kelly (KPW Print), Seamus Duffy, Pat O'Sullivan, Paul Hargadon, Kevin Whyte (RIP). Front (L-R): Ruairi Moore (Asst. Editor), Martine Schmidt (AOIFE), Nicola Hampson, Colm Croffy (Editor).

BACD Company and young second level students which in the last 10 years has predominately been Garbally TY Classes. Ken delivers to all the National Schools and key village stores to all our villages within our Common Bond radius and sometimes as far as Kildare. We know from families and the post office that over 500 copies are posted to family overseas and around the country!

We were very lucky early on to secure the engagement and support of notable writers and historians of the locality who have given of their time and energy freely – Ken Kelly, Barry Lally, Pat Johnston, Sean Tully, Wille Tully, Damien McCullagh, Gerry Devlin, Evelyn Donellan to name a few and scores of other PROS and correspondents.

We have grown in reach and content from 32 pages and 3,000 copies to 64 pages and 6,500 copies every two months and have a valuable platform in showcasing all the many positive attributes of our town, hinterland and community. Advertising Manger Lyn has grown our supporters list from 13 to over 165.

We have produced over 600 community videos that illuminate our town on the World wide web – last year alone clips were viewed a massive 210,000 times. Any video/report we make gets viewed by an average of 3,500 people. We have over 6,600 facebook fans, we are tweeting and instagramming and finding ways to tell our positive story through social media, which in time will develop into a full information channel of its own. Sinead Colleran has revamped our Website -ballinasloe.ie – to where it automatically ranks second highest in all Google searches!

Over the next few editions we will offer all of the main sports & cultural and community groups, starting with soccer, to undertake a decade lookback on their developments and we will script some review pieces on the town and aspects within.

We would welcome any personal reflections or reminisces from our readers as well. Floods, Recessions, Elections, Tragedies and Pandemic Lockdowns have not stopped us printing our editions – lack of business support and community indifference might, but thankfully to date there is not much evidence of that.

Here's hoping to the next decade of growth.

BY COLM CROFFY

## WEBSITE GROWS EXPONENTIALLY

Thanks to our Website Editor, Sinead Colleran, who approached the Company (which had been offered the old Town Council domain name to manage) as part of a third level project - we have had an explosion of on line visitor growth since its relaunch in 2015.

All the videos content, all Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts signpost the domain name [www.ballinasloe.ie](http://www.ballinasloe.ie).

2016 – 8,000 visits per annum, rising in 2019 to 32,000 visits and then in 2020 we were topping an average of 4,000 visits a month - which is about 48,000 average, unique visitor was with the Top referrer - Google.

Ballinasloe.ie is SECOND in google when you search Ballinasloe and this was something that was achieved organically – with no paid SEO etc which is quite an achievement! The only one in front of us is the Wikipedia Ballinasloe entry!

There are over 3,000 pages on the website – mostly news items from Ballinasloe Life but also:

Shops, A to Z Directory, Links to sister Ballinasloe sites such as [shopballinasloe.ie](http://shopballinasloe.ie) and [exploreballinasloe.ie](http://exploreballinasloe.ie), various special projects ie: People of the Year, Zombie Walk, Christmas Window Display, Sports Hub. Fully mobile responsive with quick dial, quick email and quick links all enabled.

On a quarterly average the top five areas visited on the site are:

1. [Ballinasloe.ie/news](http://Ballinasloe.ie/news)
2. [Ballinasloe.ie/shops.html](http://Ballinasloe.ie/shops.html)
3. [Ballinasloe.ie/a-to-z.html](http://Ballinasloe.ie/a-to-z.html)
4. [Ballinasloe.ie/parish-pastoral-council.html](http://Ballinasloe.ie/parish-pastoral-council.html)
5. [Ballinasloe.ie/churches.html](http://Ballinasloe.ie/churches.html)

# A DECADE ON, 60 EDITIONS LATER SERVICING LOCAL BUSINESS



**6,500 copies every 2 months and over 5,000 readers on line with an additional online facebook community in the larger hinterland and overseas of over 50,000, positions LIFE well for business.**

Audit Bureau figures nationally indicate that a magazine copy is read by at least 3.5 people so our readership is about 21,000 every two months with the online tribe from 5,000 upwards!

LIFE is the only practical local regular publication – every 8 weeks that records our achievements, successes, passings, coming, news and features as well as a comprehensive “What’s On” guide.

The economic model which once sustained publications and newspapers is broken. Newspaper sales have declined significantly in the past ten years by up to 50%.

“Revenues from print advertising for national titles has dropped from a high of €367m in 2007 to €87m in 2019. The forecast for 2020 is around €60m, a decline of over 30% compared to last year. The decline in print advertising has not been replaced by digital advertising, which is being hoovered up by giant digital corporations such as Google & Facebook, who secured €425m in ad revenues from this market in 2019, compared to €26m for national news publishers” stated Vincent Connolly, Chair of Newsbrands Ireland in his Dail Committee statement of the 16 Dec 2020.

LIFE Magazine has bucked that trend growing from 3,000 copies of a 40 page pilot in Spring of 2011, moving to 4,500 copies of 48 pages within two editions and by Volume 2 - 58 pages, Volume 8 to 64 pages at 6,500 copies per edition where it now remains with a ratio of display adverts to articles and photos about 3 to 1.

In the decade to date the Magazine has retained the advertising and marketing spend of approximately €529,500 in the local community through the generous investment of some 165 plus business advertisers and community focused firms.

Over the 60 editions we wrote about 94 new businesses and people starting out –employing some 270 plus people – primarily in the services sector and reported on a labour force in the winter prior to the pandemic of some 3,600 local jobs!

Sadly we had to report on some firms closing with recession, retirement, 2 firms leaving the Enterprise Centre for Oranmore and Loughrea with the loss of over 120 jobs, Aptar very recently with the loss of 120 posts and of course the iconic Hayden’s Hotel in October 2016 with the loss of 35 jobs.

Other firms that closed included Scannell’s Financial Services, Broderick’s Pharmacy, Chris Daly Shoes, Sarah Parkers, Image, Harney Dry Cleaners, Harney’s Office Supplies, Liam Jordan Photography, Oat Gallery Bookstore, FBD Insurances, Crumbs and Cream, Pat Finn Auctioneers, Mannion Sportswear, Premier Proteins, Parkmore Switchgear, Jean’s High Society, Butchers Mal Croffy and Kevin Reynolds, Pubs Egan’s Bar and The Duck Inn and Stepping Stones.

Glancing back we reported on the last ever Chamber of Commerce dinner dance in the Shearwater in January 2012, the arrival of the Business Alliance Town Centre Business group, the year before and for every edition from Town Council Mayor at the time Pat Sullivan’s opening message till edition 58 – the Big Dig, parking and disruption have constantly been between our covers!! Mayor Pat in his opening interview was confident that the Big Dig would be done by 2015!!

We also celebrated milestone events for business commencing with Dubarry’s 75th, Salmon’s 50th and Kilmartin’s 50th in 2012, Beechlawn Organic Farms 10 years in Vol 2 Issue 5, Garbally View’s 20 years and Broderick’s Pharmacy 20th and Connelly’s Builders all in 2013. In 2014 we reported on Dalata taking over the management of the Shearwater Hotel.

In 2015 we again saluted Valerie’s of Aughrim 10th Birthday, Weilys Nursey 25th Anniversary, 40 Years of Cahalan’s Jewellers, the 5th Successful year of M6 Motors, 22 Years of Gerry Croffy Machinery and 6 Decades of Grenham’s Funeral Directors.

2017 saw us salute 10 years of Gannet’s Fishmongers, Our Credit Union’s 50 years of lending and successful business, 40 years of Hogarty’s Home Furnishings and Floor Coverings, Willie Burke’s 25 years on Main St and a four decade birthday for his Main St. neighbour - Michael Ward Menswear.

2018 readers celebrated 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Tony Carrolls Butchers, 60 Years of the Pillar House and the Gibbons Family involvement. 60 years of Kellers in Main St. 30 years of Tony Dolphin’s Stoneworks, 55 years of Fletchers, 20 years of Byron’s Shoes and two decades of Ballindereen Nursing Home. The winter editions of that year saw us report on Tomas and Caroline Gullane’s 75 years on Main St., Val Coleran’s UTAH’s 10 years in town centre, and 40 years of Pat and Una McDonagh in their empire founding original Main St. premises.

The last edition included Geraldine Dolan’s 20 years in business with Society Travel, the Flaherty family enjoying 25 years with Garbally Oil and Jennifer

Sheridan’s Tiny Tots Creche marking 20 years. July of 2018 saw the Comer Group purchase outright and plan a huge investment in the Shearwater Hotel.

In January 2019 we reported after the mid-decade demise of both Chamber of Commerce and Business Alliance the formation of young progressive organisation of risk taking entrepreneurs – The Pulse Club.

That same year saw the 70th Anniversary of KPW Print, 20 Years of the Development Company, 50 years of Dolans’ Kilgarave, 64 Years of Divillys of Dunlo St. In 2020 we saluted 40 years of Gerry Bruen – with Bruens Insurance Brokerage and in Autumn - 20 years of Magee’s Deli Store.

The LIFE team collated and published two subscription paid for Town Team Shop Local Flyers and published and distributed two Black Friday Special. An Post Distributed Supplements for FREE to local business during the disruption to the town centre.

For the first two Lockdown editions of April/ May and June/ July no businesses were charged for their adverts and the Board covered the costs of the online and prepay subscription magazine.

LIFE Magazine is continually used to promote the Town for Inward Investment with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Just Transition Commission, Hidden Heartlands – it continually PROVES how vibrant an place we are and what a nice, facility rich location, to move to or raise a family.

Over 150 business people and firms have been videoed and promoted on the Facebook page and in the years 2014 to 2017 the LIFE team provided Social Media Training and support to get as many firms using the web for marketing and sales.

For house/leaflet drops LIFE is some 65% cheaper than having to organise your own publicity flyer through An POST. For typical weekly print media our cost per impressions is about 60% less. Our rates have not increased in seven years!

An Post and Rates book tell us there are some 300 business in our locality to have enjoyed the continual support from over 55% of them in our first decade of publishing has been phenomenal.

We hope that the business community continue to support the publication and online project into its next decade.

We acknowledge the founding Advertisers and also salute the firms-13 in all-who have never missed supporting an Edition.

166 Advertiser / Subscribers			
	Founding	Additional	Total
Volume 1	29	6	35
Volume 2	38	18	56
Volume 3	43	23	66
Volume 4	50	22	72
Volume 5	58	12	70
Volume 6	54	14	68
Volume 7	55	19	74
Volume 8	63	13	76
Volume 9	65	13	78
Volume 10	64	9	73

## ORIGINAL SUBSCRIBERS

- » Allied Irish Bank
- » Ballinasloe Credit Union
- » Barna Waste
- » Broderick’s Pharmacy
- » Carlton Shearwater Hotel
- » Concannon’s Spar
- » Delaney’s - House Furnishers
- » Dillons Tyres & Dillons Auctioneers
- » Dolans Service Station
- » Dubarry
- » Duffy Discount
- » Dunne’s Supervalu
- » East Nightclub
- » Fair & Murtagh Solicitors
- » Fred Kilmartin Ltd.
- » Garbally Oil
- » George M. Coyle - Accountants & Auditors
- » Gullane’s Hotel
- » Hutchinson & Davidson
- » Keller Travel
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- » Millrace Nursing Home
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BY COLM CROFFY

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Back (L-R): Brendan Kelly, Tom Lucas (Ballinasloe Credit Union), Marian Brady (BCU), Seamus Duffy, John Power (BCU). Front: Sean O'Hagan (BCU), Noel Madden (Manager BCU).



Back (L-R): Cllr. Cathal Concannon, Cllr. Aidan McGrath, Mayor Pat O'Sullivan, Seamus Duffy, Paul Hargadon. Front (L-R): Cllr. Johnny Walsh, Cllr. Carmel Grealy, Cllr. Lucy Llyod-Keighery, County Cllr. Dermot Connolly.

## PIONEERING REPORTERS

Each Edition and Volume had a number of Trainee undergraduate or Co-operative Education Students from University of Limerick, GMIT or NUIG supporting the Editor as Chief Reporters, Online Content Creators and Videographers.

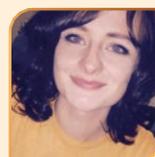
Allied to these young people working for 6 and 9 months stints were a host of other Campus Followers from Ireland, Spain, Italy and France on various mobility training support schemes.

Their work with Social Media content and Video was huge - chief of whom were Darragh Lynch, Tommy Wall, Florian Bec, Kevin Sionneau, Steve Tynan, Samatha Berry. All of whom were trained by our Project Creative Director - Kerry's Will Nolan.

Below is the Rogues Gallery of past reporters and where they are in their career now. Many of them have sent messages of goodwill and congrats to the Magazine and we will publish these and other look back shots in the Fbook Page over the February Month !!



**VOLUME 1**  
**Ruairi Moore**  
Writer for video game company, Lairon



**VOLUME 1**  
**Caitriona Ni Chathain**  
Freelance media, tv/short film



**VOLUME 2**  
**Barry Ó Crofaigh**  
Deputy Head AML Compliance Risk Management



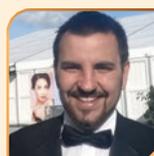
**VOLUME 2**  
**Siofra Mannion**  
Regional Sales Manager, Splunk



**VOLUME 3**  
**Owen Dunne**  
Online editor, LIT



**VOLUME 3**  
**Pamela Ryan**  
Manager, Content Creator, Digital Marketing



**VOLUME 4**  
**Kevin O'Connor**  
Marketing Coordinator Treaty Brewery



**VOLUME 4**  
**Conor Finnerty**  
Parliamentary Asst. to Michael Fitzmaurice TD



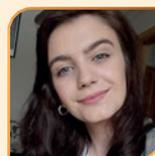
**VOLUME 5**  
**Zara Hill**  
English teacher at Crescent College Comp.



**VOLUME 5**  
**Ciara Beresford**  
UI/UX Designer at CORE HR



**VOLUME 6**  
**Brian Ciepierski**  
Office Administrator South Doc Killarney



**VOLUME 6**  
**Laura Sheehan**  
Marketing and Communications Officer, London Irish Centre



**VOLUME 7**  
**Kevin Kavanagh**  
Digital Marketing Manager 3D Design Bureau



**VOLUME 7**  
**Stephen Coleman**  
Sales Assistant Techstar Limerick



**VOLUME 8**  
**Ian O'Boyle**  
Fibre Optic Scheduling Administrator TLI Group



**VOLUME 9**  
**Donagh Moore**  
Third Level Student



**VOLUME 9**  
**Je Je Bergau**  
Digital Marketing Educator for Shaw Academy



**VOLUME 10**  
**Liam Cosgrove**  
Third level Student



**VOLUME 10**  
**Jack Treacy**  
Third level Student

# SOME WELL-KNOWN GENTS OF BALLINASLOE

Courtesy of Liam Jordan Photography



Joe Hayes



Georgie Grehan



Sheamie Dodd



Joe Murray



Alfie Mitchell



Gerry Kelly



Jim Burke



Willie Sinclair



Jackie Holmes



Liam Keller



Buddy Donlon



Donal Scannell



Joseph Murray



Vince Walsh



Patrick Cronin



P.J. Guinness



John Joe Killeen



John Waters



Kevin Hill



Rory Kilduff



Doc Caulfield



Mal Croffy



Tony Colohan



Mike Martin



Micheal Breathnach



Jimmy Conway

First published in February of 2011 - some 25 well known characters with very distinguished faces. 7 gone to their eternal reward. Since February 2011 sadly over 500 funerals have taken place in town . Life Magazine carried the first of over 85 Appreciations and Obituaries with Archbishop Dr. Joe Cassidy and Minnie Grenham beloved Bar Owner in Main Street in Volume 3 Edition 1 - April/ May 2013 after families and friends approached the team for inclusion - Photo courtesy of Liam Jordan formerly of Main St, who was a very supportive professional lensman to the Magazine in it's fledgling years.

Ballinasloe Credit Union located, on Main Street, has been at the heart of the community for many years, paving the way for financial inclusion, stability and enabling progression in many households.

Credit Unions also support local community initiatives and charities because they understand that it is the little things that make the difference. Facing uncertainty in 2021, the community of Ballinasloe can rest assured your Local Credit Union is here to support you.

Many within the community have had their world turned upside down and some continue to experience financial difficulties due to changed circumstances. Launching a new mobile app, Ballinasloe Credit Union now allows you to do everything all from your phone and remains committed to supporting and engaging with members.

Credit Union Chairperson Marian Brady stated "We are proud to be part of a movement that is regarded so highly across the country. Our dedicated staff and volunteers genuinely care about what our members want, and this is why we have consistently tailored our services and products to our members' specific needs, so we are looking forward to rolling out some new products and services in 2021."

The Credit Union is launching a new current account this year, "It means Credit Union members will now be able to get a competitive Current Account from their trusted Credit Union. They will no longer need to go to a bank to get this service. Members using the current account facility will have access to a globally accepted Mastercard Debit Card offering contactless payments, standing orders, direct debits, and an overdraft facility" explains CEO Grainne Murphy.

Shane McNeill, Business Development Manager at BCU acknowledged: "Even before the pandemic, there were already major shifts in credit union members' demands. While members still want the personal and reliable service that credit unions provide, their needs have changed with their circumstances; they now also want mortgages, small business loans, and other specialised financial products."

The Credit Union successfully launched a specialised farming loan



John Heapes lending manager & Shane McNeill business development manager BCU pictured at the marina for the promotion of the new Ballinasloe Credit Union mobile app & online lending facility.

in 2018 and following on from the success of this product they have launched two business loan products in 2020.

In the coming months they look forward to be able to offer mortgage facilities to their members looking to buy their first home. The Credit Union is constantly evolving and developing services for their members and community.

Today, investing in new technology and processes is essential. Shortly, the credit union will be launching a new digital platform to facilitate online loan applications and new members onboarding, meaning from the comfort of your home you can join and apply for a loan.

BCU has forged a strong bond with members and indeed the wider community. This is not just because of their commitment to the provision of member-driven, not-for-profit savings and loan services, but also due to a programme of sponsorship and donations to local sporting clubs, youth initiatives and charities.

The Credit Union is currently finalising its Virtual AGM which is scheduled to take place online in March 2021. Members will shortly receive their copy of the financial reports and login procedures for the forthcoming AGM in the post.

For more information on all the services and products visit their website [www.ballinasloecreditunion.com](http://www.ballinasloecreditunion.com) / email [info@ballinasloecreditunion.ie](mailto:info@ballinasloecreditunion.ie) or Tel (090)-964-3179.



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# ONLINE COURSES

## SKILLS TO ADVANCE



### CERTIFICATE IN LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Level 6 (National Framework of Qualifications)

#### FUNDED TRAINING THROUGH THE SKILLS TO ADVANCE SCHEME

Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb) are delivering a new Leadership & Management training initiative for employers who wish to upskill their employees. This highly subsidised programme aims to upskill either those in/ or aspiring to be in a supervisory role to maximise a company's ability to deal with the business environment, its challenges and opportunities. Two programme options are available where managing employees who are either **working remotely** or **workplace based**. Modules include:

- Understanding the Management Role to Improve Management Performance,
- Motivating People in the Workplace,
- Managing and Implementing Change in the Workplace,

Either: Option 1: Managing Remote Workers

Option 2: Managing Stress and Conflict in the Organisation

- Additional modules and progression opportunities are also available.
- Course duration 12 weeks

### CUSTOMER SERVICE IN INDUSTRY

Level 5 Certificate (National Framework of Qualifications)

#### FUNDED TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES THROUGH THE SKILLS TO ADVANCE INITIATIVE

Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb) are delivering a new Customer Service in Industry training programme for employers who wish to upskill their employees. This funded initiative is aimed at upskilling and reskilling employees in the workplace. This online accredited course in Customer Service will equip staff with usable skills and practical knowledge to enable them to provide a quality Customer Service within Industry. Topics covered include:

- Principles of Customer Service,
- Consumer Legislation,
- Customer Complaints and Compliments,
- Customer Service Challenges,
- Teamwork and Wellbeing in Customer Service.
- Course duration 11 weeks

Contact GRETb Skills to Advance Coordinator

Amanda.percy@gretb.ie or call 086 0655141



## PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR BEIBHINN

BY JACK TREACY

Local Beechlawn Girl and Irish international, Beibhinn Parsons, has been named Guinness Rugby Writers Women's Player of the Year after an outstanding breakthrough season where she was instrumental to her team contributing three tries to the team during Ireland's 2020 Six Nations run.

Rising through Ballinasloe Rugby Club, Beibhinn became Ireland's youngest ever international, earning her first cap at the age of 16 and has her whole career ahead of her still only 19 years old.

"Winning this Rugby Writers of Ireland Player of the Year award is a

real 'pinch me' moment.

To follow in the footsteps of incredible players like Ciara Griffin, Claire Molloy and Sene Naoupu is just incredible. To even be nominated for an award of this calibre has exceeded all my expectations. I would have never considered myself to be in the same bracket of players with those women" stated an excited Beibhinn.



Beibhinn Parsons



# Sinclair

## FUNERAL DIRECTORS



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Full funeral services available from Serenity Funeral Home, Main Street Ballinasloe.

## MENTAL WELLBEING

Former local Pharmacist and current Board member with B.A.C.D., Pines Resident Kevin Broderick has volunteered to compile some pieces on our mental well being as we enter practically the 12th month of the COVID Pandemic.

They are not meant to be patronising or lecturing nor in anyway are a substitute for

someone reaching out for practical help and support but they are a little signposting checklist of how we can keep going to get to the brighter, better and safer summer ahead. The links are to the National agencies and the local links and contact numbers are valid at the time of going to print.

### FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING:

**1. Connect with People:** Talk to someone and listen to them. Phone or arrange to meet for a chat with a close friend, family member or colleague.

**2. Be Active:** Exercise is extremely beneficial for the human body. Exercise reduces stress and anxiety, improves memory, Helps you sleep better and boosts your overall mood. Go outside and go for a walk, run, cycle or do some gardening to help your physical and mental health.

**3. Take Notice:** Be aware of the world around you and how you are feeling. Take notice of your surrounding environment. Savour the moment. Be mindful of how others around you are feeling. Take 10 minutes out of your day to practice mindfulness and to breathe. Keep a daily gratitude journal.

**4. Keep Learning:** Embrace new experiences and opportunities. Exercising the mind is a good strategy for protecting your mental wellbeing. Trying something new and getting out of your comfort zone, can be rewarding. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving, to make you more confident and to enhance your self-esteem.

**5. Give to others:** Your time, your words, your presence. Participating in the community such as volunteering has proven to help a person's wellbeing and self-worth. Seeing yourself linked to your community can be hugely rewarding and creates stronger connections with the people around you.

### IF YOUR MOOD DOES NOT IMPROVE:

- » Seeking Help: Visit a Doctor (G.P.)
- » Phone or go to your doctor, or ask someone to phone for you.
- » In Ballinasloe: Dunlo Medical Centre 090 9643900  
Marina House Medical 090 9643777,  
Portiuncula Hospital 090 9648200
- » Emergency Services 999 or 112

There are local services providing various treatments including counselling. To avail of your nearest

registered counsellor check on-line at [www.iacp.ie](http://www.iacp.ie) Find a Therapist. Below is a list of some Ballinasloe Therapists:

- » Majella Comer-Holistic Therapist 089 4406930
- » Dawna Concannon-Counselling and Psychotherapy 087 4198195
- » Valerie Dolan-Life Coach/Healthcare Practitioner 087 6458979
- » Brendan Harding-Jungian Sandplay Therapist 085 1648241

- » Harmony Hypnosis-Hypnotherapist and Mediator 087 2055475
- » Frank Kennedy-Counselling and Psychotherapy 087 3623809
- » Marie Lyons-Addiction and Counselling 087 7826020
- » Carmel O'Riordan-Counselling and Psychotherapy 087 6124356  
[www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

*'Remember, You Matter'.*

BY KEVIN BRODERICK (B.A.C.D.)

## ST. JOSEPH'S DAY CEREMONY



Ireland U18s School Rugby - John Claffey



Ireland U18s Youth John Devine



Junior Football Eoin Coleman



Junior Golf Charlie Mooney



Junior Rugby Shane Fitzpatrick



Junior Soccer Cormac Harrington

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With a smaller than usual attendance of 16 the first ever Town Hall's ZOOM AGM got under way with lots of apologies from folks that would have loved to have been present but wifi speeds and connectivity prevented.

Chairperson Maire Hughes informed the meeting on the 16th of December that their main objective in the past year has been to protect the building, to enhance it as much as possible and to pay the essential bills.

While 2020 has been a difficult year, but for the Town Hall Family, it was an extremely sad as two of their stalwart directors have passed away, Pat McGovern and Pat Joe Guinnessy.

Their knowledge was invaluable and their commitment huge. The Town Hall members offered their deepest sympathies to their families and friends "Ní bheidh a léithidí an arís".

Maire thanked those who have continued to support the theatre saying: "We love the building, the best theatre west of the Shannon, a theatre to be proud of, and we need a lot of help to keep it going at any time but particularly at present."

A group of volunteers have worked at clearing and painting rooms to the rear of the building while Galway County Council removed bollards from the rear of the Hall and replacing them with Retractable Bollards to allow for access by delivery vehicles to the stage. A leak on the side roof necessitated emergency repair work during November and is an indication of the type of situations that occur with historic buildings.

Treasurer Frances Leahy gave an overview on the Society's finances and Company Auditor Claire Curley was on hand to go through



Soprano Rachel Goode and MC Avril Nic Gabhainn who were involved in the successful Live Stream Christmas Together Show which had almost 3,000 viewers

in detail the annual returns made by the Company detailing the trading income, the grant aid and the fundraising as well as the expenditure for the year in review.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions the theatre has lost out on many valuable nights. Druid Theatre was able to put on a small production of Tom Murphy's "On the Outside" in September, and in December saw their first live stream fundraising event "Christmas Together" an event that is still available to watch on YouTube featuring a variety of local performers, which raised almost €1,000.

They successfully obtained a small grant to upgrade their security systems and to purchase an Ozone Sanitation Unit for their building. The Theatre, with their remaining funds, plans to host more online events in 2021 with no indication as to when they can return to live performances.

The Committee for 2021 are: Maire Hughes, Mary O'Connell, Frances Leahy, Eoin Croffy, Elaine O'Hanlon, Gerry Sweeney, Mary Barber, Ben Parker, Aoife Vaughan. Alan Harney and Elizabeth Affolter newly elected to the committee. At the committee meeting on January 7th Ben Parker and Mary Barber took up the vacant Director spaces.

Town Hall Theatre now has little means of generating money to pay their essential bills but remain optimistic and look forward to re-opening their doors.

For those readers who may be able to help Town Hall Theatre out financially please go to their website [www.ballinasloetownhall.com](http://www.ballinasloetownhall.com) or contact them by email at [ballinasloetownhalltheatre@gmail.com](mailto:ballinasloetownhalltheatre@gmail.com)



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# MARTINA DOHERTY SCOOPS AWARD

BY JACK TREACY

Martina Doherty, mother of well-known International Composer Amie Doherty, recently won the Bands of Ireland Award 2020 for her work with Ballinasloe Town Band.

Nominated for the award by Band Chairperson Damien O'Neachtain, Brackernagh-born Martina has undertaken a huge role in the organisation, being the child welfare officer but also spearheading most fundraiser projects.

She has also put countless hours into the refurbishing the old patriarchal hall. Organising all the works on the hall and without Martina, the Town Band would not be what it is today.

Chair Damien O'Neachtain was one of many to nominate Martina stating: "we wish to recognise the huge contribution that she makes to the Ballinasloe Town Band. The band was revived after a long break, 4-5 years ago, and Martina was one of the driving forces to get the band back together again."

As one of only 3 Brass and Reed bands in the County they were invited to play at the Tuam Mothers & Babies site, during a memorial Christmas tree & prayer service to commemorate the little ones that were buried there. It was a poignant occasion that proved very emotional for both family members and musicians alike.

The musicians also had the pleasure of participating in a recital under the shadow of the new Town Christmas tree, to spread some seasonal cheer to passing shoppers. Undeterred by the wet and windy weather conditions, weekend visits to the exterior grounds of the nursing homes in the town saw the Band safely delivering an early Christmas musical treat to the residents and staff.

As a special tribute to the heroic and selfless dedication and service frontline workers during the Covid-19 Pandemic, the band conducted a special night-time recital in the front car park of Portiuncula Hospital. The Band, each one sporting colourful fairy lights to lighten the mood and brighten the occasion and were thrilled by the reception they received.

The Band concluded its Christmas programme of public engagements playing a selection of festive Carols in St. Michael's Square before the draw for prizes for the Christmas Lights fundraiser. The performance was broadcast through the Life Magazine Fbook page and was viewed by almost 9,000 people – at home and abroad.

The planned New Year's Eve recital was ditched thanks to COVID and the band has recommenced zoom rehearsals for both the junior and senior bands until further notice.



Ballinasloe Town Band playing at the Tuam Mother & Baby site for the lighting of the memorial Christmas tree

The scaffolding at the Town Band Hall (Parochial Hall) on Dunlo Hill, has been removed indicating that the roof has been repaired.

Damien O Neachtain has extended their thanks to the hundreds of supporters who purchased slates costing €50 each thus enabling the band to complete this phase of its restoration. The "Raise the Roof" campaign will now conclude with only a small number of slates remaining to be sold.

Anyone that wishes to purchase a slate for €50 please contact Martina on 087 9710496.



Martina Doherty Bands of Ireland award winner 2020



Town Band Portiuncula Hospital recital in honour of frontline doctors, nurses and workers.



Flautist Casey Cuddy at the Portiuncula Hospital recital in honour of frontline doctors, nurses and workers.

## EU Climate Change Tips For at Home

Did you know there are simple steps you can take at home that will not only ensure our future, but actually save you money too?

**Here are our top tips.**

**Replace incandescent/halogen light bulbs** with LEDs saving up to €100 in electricity costs over a 20yr lifetime.

**Look for energy efficient appliances:** Look for an EU energy label and choose an energy efficient model.

**Fill up your washing machine:** Don't do a wash if you only have a few items of clothing. Wait until you have a full load. Less washes = less cost!

**Don't overheat your water.** A boiler at a maximum temperature of 60°C is both the most efficient and hygienic.

**Buy rechargeable batteries** and don't forget to recycle your batteries once they reach their end of life!



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Kilconnell native Eimear Noone, internationally renowned musical conductor and composer, will be conferred by the National University of Ireland, Galway with an honorary doctoral degree.

Typically awarded to those who have achieved significant contributions to cultural affairs, public service, scholarship or a field of knowledge, the ceremony will take place on campus in the summer of 2021. Noone receives this award after her achievement of being the first female conductor at the Academy Awards in February of 2020.

Eimear Noone, also the first female conductor in the National Concert Hall in Dublin, was ecstatic to learn that she has been nominated for such an award saying: "For this to happen in my home county could not be more meaningful".

Due to Covid-19, the virtual award ceremony had to be moved from November to the summer of 2021, that they may be able to host a celebratory event on campus for our 2020 graduates.

NUIG President Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh states "Each one has made an excellent and distinctive contribution to public life, the betterment of society and the interests of humanity. NUI Galway is very pleased to be in a position to respect and recognise these exceptional individuals."

With over 23.6 million viewers tuning in to watch the 2020 Oscars the spotlight was on Eimear to perform. She thrived, with Eimear and her orchestra receiving a standing ovation for their performance.

Eimear worked with RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra once again in a St. Stephen's Day Broadcast. It was her first performance in the country since conducting the Academy Awards earlier in February. In her appearance on Lyric FM, Eimear conducted big orchestral scores from video games and movies. She also conducted with Sibeal, 'Stand for Hope' composed to praise the frontline workers during this pandemic, and 'Malach Angel Messenger' from World of Warcraft written in memory of her baby son Aaron. Also featuring is music from Fortnite, The Legend of Zelda, Tomb Raider, and much more.

Commenting on the show Eimear said "This concert is extremely important to me. Right now, people need their music more than ever and we all need a bit of a lift. We chose inspirational music which we hope will keep spirits high. I'm so thrilled to have worked with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra again. To be able to make this performance happen during this very challenging time in all our lives and, at a time when we can't all be together at the concert hall, to know we can still reach audiences in Ireland and beyond with RTÉ lyric FM is truly a great joy."



Eimear Noone conducting at the Academy Awards.



Eimear Noone First Female Conductor at the Academy Awards

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# 10 10 20 THE LAND ON DRUGS

BY JACK TREACY



Breda Larkin Planting Trees with her father

Local-based comedian Breda Larkin, in a recent project named "10-10-20 The Land on Drugs", teamed up with Talamh Beo at The Emerald Ballroom last October where she sought to encourage debate on the and play against the prevailing assumptions we hold about our current farming systems and rural livelihood.

Challenging old mantras in hopes that together they could come up with new farming systems to aid and restore eco-systems that were destroyed and to construct soils, making the land appear better than when they began all while hoping that they would gather a few laughs along the way.

Plans have been put on hold for Breda due to Covid-19. A film was planned to be screened in February of 2021 alongside several

workshops covering various topics surrounding farming.

With Galway 2020 events being pushed out to at least April, Breda remains hopeful that she can perform in the Town Hall Theatre.

"It has been really difficult, I have had interviews that are unusable due to the audio corrupting or the camera losing focus during online interviews, I have been so heavily reliant on the broadband and many living in rural areas don't have access to quality broadband leading to many difficulties" explains Brenda.

Breda has been using her time to edit the footage she has gathered from her visits with the Talamh Beo farmers and is hopeful that she can get quality footage uploaded to the Talamh Beo YouTube channel in the near future.

Many interviews have already been uploaded to the channel under the title "Hedge School Farming" with videos ranging from mushroom growing to holistic land management. Throughout February Breda plans to upload more interviews conducted over zoom with a Teagasc advisor, dairy farmer and soil experts all featuring. She hopes that the project would continue throughout the year and is looking forward to the fair day on 10-10-21.

## FOLK CHOIR ANNUAL APPEAL

Due to Covid-19 St. Michael's Choir were unable to do their annual Christmas Carols on Main Street, so they took their singing online with five members representing the choir taking part.

Anne Jordan, Emma O'Reilly, Eleanor McEvoy, John Feely, Johnny Johnston, Michael McCullagh, Sean Og Hurley and Sean Treacy, delivered outstanding festive favourites.

The online programme has had 21,000 people seeing the appeal with 3,600 of those watching the event in its entirety, all in aid of Ballinasloe Social Services and Ballinasloe Care and Repair.

The programme can still be viewed on the Ballinasloe Life Facebook page where it was uploaded on December 20, 2020. Raising €3,427 to date you can still donate by giving your donations to Sean Og or Ann Jordan but they will be closing the appeal shortly.



St. Michaels Folk Choir some years ago



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Brid with Home Energy Saver Kit

Ballinasloe Library launch the Home Energy Saving kits for Galway Libraries and Europe Direct. The new kit aims to help householders make sense of the energy they use every day. These kits contain six practical energy-saving tools so that you can carry out a mini energy audit of your home and find the easiest and most important areas to save energy.

According to Codema, Dublin's Energy Agency, you can reduce your energy bill by up to 20% while improving the comfort of your home and helping contribute to a

better environment at the same time. The tools in the kit are easy-to-use and they provide an interactive and tangible way to introduce the concept of energy usage into your home. The Home Energy Kit is a winner of an EU Sustainable Energy Award.

The Kit contains a fridge and freezer thermometer, a temperature and humidity, thermal leak detector, a plug-in energy monitor, radiator key, and a stopwatch.

Worksheet forms are also included alongside a Home Energy Saving Kit Manual so you can keep a record of your results and compare them to your past results. Upon completing the surveys, the forms will be entered into a weekly draw for a chance to win €100. The Kits

will be available for loan from five libraries across Galway with another five coming on stream later this year.

The Library also provided an online class titled 'An Introduction to Contemplative Dance' which took place on January 21, as part of the First Fortnight Festival.

It took place right before midday and was conducted by Bernadette Divilly, a professional member of Dance Ireland, and hosted Ballinasloe Women's Group. The tutorials were distributed through the library online in conjunction with online classes. Bernadette engages with a cohort of peers who have practised with working the body across disciplines. These dance tutorials focused on mindful movement and the enjoyment for all those who had participated.

The Library, due to covid-19 regulations, must remain closed until further notice. However, via the libraries online service you can easily access a range of E-books and Audiobooks, magazines, newspapers and much more through the mobile app borrow box where you can borrow up to four e-books or audiobooks on your mobile phone, tablet or computer online at any time using your library card's ID number and pin.

Lastly, should you have any library books at home you do not need to worry as there are no fines for late returns at this current moment so you can return the book when the libraries reopen.



Bernadette Divilly

## COMHALTAS ZOOM AGM

Ballinasloe Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann held its AGM recently via Zoom. BCCE established their music lessons two years ago and since then they have been a major success. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions all Comhaltas activities including lessons and music sessions ceased. Although, the branch is looking at the possibility of holding lessons online by Zoom.

For those looking to join BCCE, membership for the coming year can be paid to any of the branch officers or posted to Secretary Martina Corcoran, Newtown, Creagh, Ballinasloe. Co. Galway or contact the secretary at martinacorcoran60@gmail.com. You can also check out their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ballinasloecomhaltas>

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# ERIC NAUGHTON-OUR MARATHON MAN

BY JACK TREACY

After 12 months of running 4,000km for local charity Eric Naughton brought his efforts to a close with over €4,600 raised and a final run on New Year's Eve.

Throughout the Summer and Autumn Eric took on a 3,000km running challenge for East Galway Midlands Cancer Support Centre concluding with a marathon on November 7th.

Eric has continued his running throughout December, running a further 1000km and in addition on the final day of the year Eric capped it off by running an incredible 42km. Donations to Eric's fundraiser were plentiful as Eric raised over €4,600 for the local organisation East Galway Midlands Cancer Support Centre.

The Ballinasloe Road Runners Club has been to the fore for this challenge and has supported Eric greatly along the way with many other runners joining Eric on various occasions.

With that in mind, Eric decided to run another 1,000km and held a plan to run a marathon on the final day of December but due to Covid-19 restrictions, he was worried that he would be unable to complete his running in December. However, with quick thinking, Eric and those at Ballinasloe Road Runners Club were able to come up with a solution. Instead he ran to Creagh, out past Dolan's Garage, going right at the roundabout, and over to the Shannonbridge road, back to Creagh by the Pines, and back to the track. Eric completed this loop four times to complete his goal of running a marathon!

Naughton ran his final marathon for this project on New Year's Eve despite the atrocious weather. His incredible feat was showered by community support with family and friends coming out to cheer Eric on both online and by coming out to support the event.

"I'd like to thank my family, neighbours and my girlfriend for their support and words of encouragement all year. Running for the East Galway Midlands Cancer Support Centre has been a privilege and honour and all proceeds of my fundraising go to this very worthy cause" stated Eric.

East Galway Midlands Cancer Support Centre Board Chair Michael Daly was most grateful stating: "We are blessed to be based in such an amazing community."

It has been a strange year in many ways and various restrictions have impacted on how people interact and spend leisure time but positive changes have been noted. "One thing that has struck me is the number of people cycling, walking and running around Ballinasloe," states Eric Naughton See [ww.ifundraise.ie/ericnaughton](http://ww.ifundraise.ie/ericnaughton) for updates on his fundraising journey.



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## VALERIE THORINGTON - DISTINGUISHED HORSE

Fohenagh's Valerie Thorington, a member of the Ballinasloe Horse and Agriculture Show for over 45 years, served on the Board of the Irish Shows' Association for almost 20 years, but stepped down at their AGM just before Christmas.

Joining the board in 2001 she was the only female representative from the Western Region.

"Coming from a caring profession, Valerie always showed compassion towards others and this pattern followed through with her dealings with shows in the Western Region and further afield. Valerie's experience and knowledge of the horse industry was valued by board members, she was always constructive and precise in her contributions. During her time on the board, she was diligent in her approach and thorough in her execution" stated Catherine Gallagher, President of the Irish Shows' Association.

"We wish Valerie and her family good health in her retirement" Catherine concluded.

Valerie's stellar career in the world of horse breeding, farming and poultry grew steadily from her earliest farming influences, growing up in the middle of three girls.

Her father, James Johnson, used to allow her to ride the work horse on his day of rest and when not boarding in Athlone and schooling in Dublin, Valerie used all her down time to work with the horses.

She admits that she had pluck as a young teenager. She hunted with the East Galway's on a farm horse called Flame that her late Dad and Mick Madden bought her.

"I would hack out to 24 miles to Laurencetown, leave the horse there, Jack Kenny would collect me and the next morning I'd hitch a lift out and hunted the whole day home" chuckles Valerie.

In common with a lot of educated young women of the west in the mid fifties she left to study nursing in St. Thomas' Hospital, London. Hacking and galloping were still in the DNA of the girl from the west and she really wanted a car! So a job was advertised that needed



Valerie Thorington, Allanah, Zara, and Tinklebell.



Dorothy Scarry (ISA Officer), Young Grellan Connolly, Zara Thorington (Winner Donkey Derby), Councillor Dermot Connolly (Breeder Champion Donkey), Valerie Thorington

Medical training but provided a vehicle. She was accepted and began her medical repping career.

"I was told on the first morning I had to collect my car and supplies. I was thrilled but then found it was all in company HQ - in Aberdeen !! I then had to bus up and drive my brand new Ford Anglia all the way back down".

Transferring back home in the swinging 60s, meant she could garage her company car at the Fohenagh homestead and use her down time to help her then widowed mother with the mixed farm and the yearlings.

Her first Hunter purchase was from the local Veterinary Officer Billy Flanagan - "Dr. Dolittle" and she point-to-pointed with her great friend and neighbour Shirley North.

The company car however had no hitch so herself and Shirley decided to go showing the yearlings and horses they were buying with her mother's Morris Minor and horse box in tow - all over the Show circuit.

She was friendly with the Ffrench family of Castleffrench and they very often had friends in for various seasonal engagements- especially shooting parties.

A young Essex Agronomist and Engineer, John Thorington, as the lore goes, came to target birds on the estate lands but landed a completely different and more interesting quarry when introduced to Valerie.

They became an item and married in a downpour. She remembers

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the Marquee on the lawn, the summer showers, sandals and the mud of all her family and distinguished guests.

"Philip Treacy was only a whip of a five-year-old but loved horses and spent a lot of time at John Gleave's forge. He arrived to St. Catherine's Church with a horseshoe wrapped in tinfoil and a little posie of flowers for me. He used a photo of that horseshoe on the cover of one of his recent catalogues" recalls Valerie.

They set up home in the ancestral house and Valerie maintained her career assisting her mother breaking half-breds for a step up from egg money. John put his engineering skills to good use, being one of the first in the west to acquire a scanner and went around to farms selling the service.

They had two children – James who lives on the farm and Alannah who resides down the road.

There was an add she recalls in the local paper for a Committee meeting for the Show in Hayden's Hotel and after having a frustrating outing to her first fair with her three-year-old, she felt things could be streamlined. So she toddled in.

"PJ Noonan was in command at the time, Martin Joyce was Secretary and John Harney was PRO or some other Committee Officer. There were not too many women about, but fair play I made my observations and the next thing I knew John Harney asked would I agree to join the committee and, like the fool I was – I said yes" states Valerie.

People she feels sometimes forget the huge history attached to the Ballinasloe Show Grounds and the modern developments of the Irish sport horse. Her Grandfather was on the original Show Committee, some 177 years ago with Lord Clancarty.

"Dan Corry and his colleagues dreamed up the Showjumping Society of Ireland, in a tea tent in our Showgrounds. The Curragh Equitation School used to competitively break in their new mounts. Ned O'Flynn and I - over the back of the mare, developed the first Stallion Show in the country" enthuses Valerie.

Over five decades of show observing she feels that the classes have not really changed too much but the local exhibitor is now



Valerie Thorington as First Female President of a Western Region Show Officially Welcomes First Female President of Ireland Mary Robinson, 1991.

competing, not with other farm families, but with professional horse or other animal breeders.

"This development has absolutely raised standards but it does serve to frustrate the element of competing with being the best in your area or county" she explains.

The Irish Shows' Association, since Secretary Michael Hughes' day, has developed the safety and presentation of all shows magnificently. Fencing has been revolutionized, the rope fences will become a thing of the past, most ground facilities have improved hugely to cater for families and spectators.

"I was asked would I join the ISA some 21 summers ago and I said why not – over that time huge support has been given to many shows up and down the country and its has been my pleasure and privilege to visit and assist at so many" states Valerie. She is strongly of the view that the huge development in facilities in the local showground is underestimated by the public "When I started on the Committee we had a facility that was used 3-4 times a year. We now have in the middle of our town – with huge car parking facilities, two sets of modern jumps, an all-weather sand jumping floodlight area that is now being used over 40 weeks a year" enthuses Valerie.

She hopes that more young people will get involved with shows everywhere – it can give them a huge sense of achievement she believes.

Her worry for the Show Society movement is the problem of Sponsorship post pandemic. "Between Brexit and COVID I fear what little marketing money will be left in our agri business community" she notes.

As for the future of the Irish Horse and breeding locally she is more certain. "The Thoroughbred Irish Draught Cross has won medals all over the world, especially in eventing of late and I think our equestrian breeding acumen will copperfasten our future" declares Valerie.

She is so looking forward to meeting all her Show Society friends and ISA former colleagues as soon as the pandemic is behind us all!



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## OLYMPICS IN SIGHT FOR SIVE

26-year-old Sive Brassil, a Ballinasloe native, is an elite athlete training in Modern Pentathlon, a multi-discipline sport that involves running, swimming, show jumping, fencing and shooting. She holds ambitions to compete at next summers rescheduled Olympic games taking place in Tokyo. "It would be a dream to represent Ireland should I qualify".



Sive Brassil pictured for the Olympic Federation of Ireland's 'Dare to Believe' schools programme.

Growing up in Mount Pleasant Avenue, her home, where she was able to see and hear the showgrounds, ignited her passion for sports. Sive attended Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh where she was continuously supported in her sports.

Being the youngest of five, Sive followed in her sibling's footsteps becoming a member of East Galway Hunt Pony club, Swimming Club and Athletics Club, at age 7 when she was old enough to join.

She added fencing and shooting by the time she was 12 years old to complete the Pentathlon.

As a teenager, Sive attended Our Lady's Bower School for Girls where she continued with her sports. Falling in love with the events, Sive states: "I have so many fond memories of all of these clubs, and the positive experiences I have had here in town are what made me want to continue with the sport and become a full-time athlete."

The town's Olympic hopeful has many supporters and key sporting influencers from growing up such as learning to ride under the mentorship of Liz Scott in East Galway Pony Club. The athlete's love for running began in the Ballinasloe and District Athletics Club, nurtured under the coaching of Michael and Anne Burke. Sive enjoyed many years in Coral Leisure swimming pool with the Ballinasloe Swimming Club too, with a few great coaches, including John Jordan and Gerry Downey.

"Without a doubt, my parents have always been and still are my biggest supporters. I'd be lost without them and they've always encouraged me to do what I love. Ballinasloe is where I found my passion for sport and so many people have helped me along the way" states Sive.

Sive was chosen along with 24 other athletes to take part in the Olympic Federation of Ireland's 'Dare to Believe' schools programme. Through this programme, she was able to revisit her old primary school, Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh, after the school applied for a curriculum based on the Olympic values.

She officially visited 2019 where she was able to reconnect with her old teachers and pupils. She spoke to the kids about their "Olympic sized dreams" and was able to teach the students all about goal setting. At the school, they were able to showcase some of the sports that she trains in.

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Sive gives a talk to Scoil Ui Cheiternaigh 2019 for Dare to Believe Programme.

Sive said: "It was such a pleasure to return to Scoil Ui Cheiternaigh and meet some of the staff that were there when I was a student. I got to say hello to my old teachers and meet some of the newer ones who were students with me when I was in school! It was so fun to talk to the kids too, they were all full of great ideas and big dreams which was exciting to see!"

In the first lockdown back in March, the athlete's Olympic progress was halted. With everything put into disarray, Sive was unable to train using her usual facilities. But she never lost her winning mentality knowing from early on that the Olympics would never be cancelled just postponed and that gave her the motivation to push herself every day in hopes of achieving her goal. The athlete continued to go for runs and she practised her shooting and fencing drills in her garden. It was a tough time but having pulled through Sive has been more fortunate in recent lockdowns with elite athletes permitted to continue with their training.

"I'm fortunate that training for elite athletes who are

preparing for the Olympics has been allowed to continue. So, I'm still able to use the pool and track and I can do sessions with my fencing coach and riding coach too. So, I'm very lucky to be able to continue my training!" enthuses a relieved Sive.

She empathises with the youth today who are having trouble with their goals and are struggling during Covid-19: "It's a difficult time for everyone at the moment but I'd encourage people to keep busy if they can. It's also important to get out and exercise if you can too, it's a great way to clear your head and stay healthy during the lockdown. I would encourage young people to find what they love and work hard at it. It's easier to dedicate yourself and work hard at something if you're passionate about it. I'd also advise young people with big dreams not to get too caught up in the result, but to enjoy the journey", she encourages.

Sive Brassil is looking forward to the summer of 2021 and continues to train very hard every day. "I just want to be able to build throughout the season, get stronger and peak for Tokyo. That would be my dream season" she explains.



Sive doing fencing drills in her garden

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Throughout the last ten years, Ballinasloe Town AFC has prospered, starting great with the club winning Best Local Club of the Year 2011. The Senior and Junior teams have scooped up all the accolades, including the coveted Connacht cup.

The youth teams have been successful in winning countless trophies and a new youth academy setup in the last few years pushes for success for future generations.

The club has even had players reach the international stage: Jordan Carr, Conor Lyang, and Heather Payne-the latter remains an integral player in the Ladies' Irish National team.

The Club and those involved in the club have been recognised for countless awards over the years with the Club starting the decade incredibly by being announced as Ireland's Best Local Sports Club in 2011.

The facilities over the years have had great development with pitches being upgraded and a new state of the art clubhouse being built in what has been a great 10 years for the club. With no signs of slowing down, Ballinasloe Town AFC continues to move forward every year.



Club Chairperson Joby Kelly

Junior and Senior Teams have had great success over the last ten years when in the 2011/12 season saw the Senior team, managed by Enda Concannon, secure the Roscommon and District League Premier Division Cup, Premier League Title and the



Winning Connacht Junior Cup Ballinasloe Town AFC 2017 Panel after the famous victory over West United.

Roscommon Knockout Cup. In 2013 the Seniors have seen similar success after they beat Westport United in the Connacht Junior Cup with Liam Lynch scoring the winner to secure the cup for the second time in their history. 2013 also saw the seniors reach the last eight of the FAI Junior Cup with the achievement being presented by RTE's Jackie Hurley, showcasing the town in the build-up to the match.

In 2014 the club's Junior team secured a third Connacht Junior Cup title once again managed by Enda. The seniors in 2017 led by managers Henry Loughnane and Kevin Flanagan were able to secure the Connacht Cup for a fourth time, in a game in which Eoin McCormack starred, scoring 3 to beat West United 3-2 in a

tight game held in Terryland Park in Galway City.

All the success that the club has had on the field of play is down to having an extensive youth structure and from developing top-class facilities for the benefit of our club members and the wider community. With youth Secretary Sonya Dowd overseeing youth affairs, with great support from the club committee and a very dedicated group of youth managers, mentors, and coaches.

The Club holds youth setups from u8s to u18s being successful in winning countless leagues and cups throughout the age groups in both the ADSL and Roscommon youth leagues.

The club has been recognised with several nominations and accolades awarded to them. In 2010, club legend and former chairperson Brendan McNally was awarded Ballinasloe Sports Volunteer of the Year award for his commitment and dedication to the team over the years. In 2011 Ballinasloe Town AFC was awarded the Best Local Sports Club of the Year award beating out many different sports clubs throughout the country.

Former Club Chairperson Noel Lyons and Club Development

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Former Ballinasloe Town A. F. C. Player Heather Payne Training with the Clubs Senior Panel August 2020



The Ballinasloe Town squad for the final.

Co-ordinator Johnny Walsh were presented with the accolade by RTE's Miriam O'Callaghan at a RTE ceremony in Dublin.

In 2017 the FAI approved the Curragh Grounds as a suitable pitch to host a U16 youth international match between Republic of Ireland and Hungary. Very large crowds attended to watch the game despite the horrific weather conditions, and they witnessed local Ballinasloe Town AFC player Jordan Carr came on late to play a key role in setting up the winning Irish goal in a 2-1 win for the Irish youths.

In 2018, the club went through a fiercely competitive process and duly qualified for the final adjudication held in Cork which consisted of the final 6 clubs remaining in the FAI Club of the year. The club did not win the overall award, but was nevertheless highly praised for the professional way they run the club and were awarded a prize of €5,000. Club Chairperson Joe Kelly was recently rewarded for his voluntary work surrounding the club after being nominated by parents of the youth players in the club.

The club have developed a new grass playing pitch for the youth teams, replacing the AstroTurf pitch surfaces, bought a new drive-on grass mower, upgrading the lights and perhaps the biggest

development of all is the construction of the new state of the art clubhouse that opened in 2017.

The year that has gone by has been tough for everyone, but the club still pushes on with multiple plans being put in place for the future.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, there is currently no training or games permitted. The club will compete in the Galway Youth league and Roscommon youth league when the restrictions are relaxed, and this is permitted by the authorities.

The club has announced that the Senior Ladies' Soccer team are back in the club once again after significant interest and several successful training sessions taking place before lockdown. We also look forward to future development plans in which they seek to upgrade the floodlights for the astro turf pitch and will submit a detailed application in hopes of gaining a grant to upgrade the astro turf pitch surface and surrounding boundaries.

Johnny Walsh, Club Development Co-ordinator, states on behalf of the club "We wish to acknowledge the fantastic work that has been carried out by the Community Employment Scheme at our grounds under the leadership of Scheme Supervisor Billy Ward and Assistant Supervisor Patricia Tierney, as well as everyone who has been a part of the club over the past ten years and is looking forward to the future years to come".

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A great opportunity for committee and parents to come together and review the year gone by was provided by the Clubs Zoom AGM. Chairperson Ann Fitzpatrick welcomed all and Club Secretary Paula Harley, Club Treasurer Laura Kelly and Club PRO Marion Ruane provided detailed reports.

A number of athletes competed in the Galway Indoor Competitions in January and the Connacht Indoor Competition in February, many got the opportunity to compete for the first time at those levels. Despite the COVID-19 interruptions many athletes continued to train and were delighted to have the opportunity to compete in the Galway Cross Country Championships in October. Some of the key highlights included:

### Galway Indoor Competition

Kate Kilkenny take home Silver in the girls u11 600m and Lauren Loughrey also won Silver in girls u10 Long Jump and came 4th in 60m sprint. Adam Murray ran a strong 600m in the u 12 boys to finish with a Silver medal also. Aoife Berrigan finished in 4th place in a very competitive 600m as did Lisa Herity placing 4th in girls 60m.

Martin Keane won Gold in the Senior Shot Put while Cillian Ó'Tuairisg also took Gold in the boys u13 Shot Put. Jamie Fernandez won gold in the boys' u18 3,000m and secure a new PB and also competed in the boys' u18 60m. Caoimhe Kilkenny also finished first in the girls u15 60m, taking home another Gold for the club.

### Connacht Indoor Competition

Luke Manning winning Bronze in the u15 boys 60 metre and Cillian ó Tuairisg, winning Silver in the boys u13 Shot Put.

### National Indoor Championship

Martin Keane won silver in weight for distance and 4th in Shot Putt and Veronica Burke also winning Silver in the 3,000 mts walk.



Aoife Berrigan winning Bronze in the girls u12 2,000m and her sister Laura Berrigan running a strong race in the girls u10 1,000m to finish in 11th place - her first cross-country competition with the club



Eva Ruane winning Gold in the girls u14 3,000m at Galway Cross Country Championship, Galway Racecourse.

### Galway Cross Country Championship

Laura Berrigan ran a great race under 10 on her Cross Country debut, finishing just one place short of winning a medal. Aoife Berrigan under 12 ran a super race in stiff competition to finish 3rd and win a bronze medal. Eva Ruane finished the day off in style for the club to win gold u14 and become Galway County Champion!

Ending an era for the Club, with Ann Fitzpatrick and Paula Harley stepping down from their roles as Club Officers and Coaches. The Club, and in particular the athletes past and present have been extremely fortunate to have had both Anne and Paula involved in coaching and mentoring. "We all share many great memories together and would like to express our sincere gratitude for the time they have given so willingly and the support and encouragement they have shown to every one of our athletes" stated new Chair Mags Kilkenny.

Elected to serve for the next season were Chairperson Mags Kilkenny, Secretary Fidelma Herity, Assistant Secretary Antoinette Stephenson, PRO Marion Ruane, Treasurer Laura Kelly, Child Welfare Officers Emma Bookless & Grace Loughrey.

Details of registration and training plans will be published on our Facebook page as soon as updates from Government allow. In the meantime, they encourage all athletes to stay active and to take every opportunity to get out and run!

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# PADRAIG PEARSE'S MINORS' SUCCESS

BY JACK TREACY

After previous success for Roscommon Minors in 2017, the squad which included four proud members of our local Padraig Pearse's Club, recently were crowned Connacht Minor champions.

After battling in gale force wind conditions on St Stephen's Day at the Connacht Centre of Excellence and after defeating a fancied Galway team in the semi-final, The Rossie's had to play a highly rated Sligo team in the final.

The local boys - Eoin Colleran, Luke Walshe, Caelun Keogh, Declan Kenny played the final during Storm Bella with the wind favouring Roscommon in the first half. Roscommon went into the second half

the squad, Luke Walshe said: "It was very strict coming up to the match, we couldn't eat what we wanted, not even at Christmas, we were told to stick to our strict carb diet. Training was very strict we just focused on our drills and our tactics."

Padraig Pearse's also had Caelun Keogh at full-back, and Declan Kenny on the panel on the day. Aaron Clogher is another local man who is the team's Performance Analyst.



(L-R) Caelim Keogh, Declan Kenny and Eoin Colleran



(L-R) Luke Walshe and Eoin Colleran



(L-R) Eoin Colleran, Declan Kenny, Luke Walshe, Caelun Keogh and Aaron Clogher.

leading by only 4 points and knew they needed a big performance to secure the cup. Against the storm, they were able to snatch the victory by three points with local Padraig Pearse's Clubman, Creagh native and Roscommon Captain Eoin Colleran, lifting the winning cup.

Captain Eoin Colleran also spoke of the difficulties they faced and what motivated them to be able to power through and get the job done: "One of our players Mark Watson broke his ankle the week before the game, that was a tough one, and towards the start of the season with ten minutes before a game was to be played a referee passed away Morgan Keena. We did it for both for Morgan and Mark."

Although the game was in the absence of family, friends, and supporters due to COVID Restrictions. They were able to dispatch Sligo to come out on top as champions.

Luke spoke of the highlights when he chuckled: "Definitely the goal, that was special."

The Padraig Pearses boys had all come through Garbally College in a proud day for the school and the South Roscommon Club.

"Thanks to all of the managers and lads who we have trained with up from the age of six. Huge thanks to our club, our schools, our families and friends, all those who have supported us over the years helping us become better players and people. You truly are our sixteenth man on the field," stated Captain Eoin Colleran at the presentation moment!



Captain Eoin Colleran Lifts The Trophy



Padraig Pearses Minor Football Team 2020

In preparation for the campaign the team had been placed on a strict diet and fitness regimes and latest Covid-19 restrictions had meant that the team had to be split up and train in their separate pods. The boys knew what was ahead of them, and they were able to keep their head down and focus on the match with the belief that they could get the job done.

Speaking on the strict preparation for the match, corner-back for

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## NEW COURTS TO OPEN BY EASTER

BY JACK TREACY

After numerous unexpected delays, the Tennis Club expects to be finally playing tennis on the newly-built courts at their new home, above the running track at Brackernagh, before Easter.

This first phase will include groundworks, two tarmac tennis courts, fencing and gates. Work has commenced on the site, but the club have had to suspend further development due to the latest coronavirus restrictions prohibiting construction work.

The next phase to be developed will come about after Easter and will work on further groundwork and a third court, artificial surfaces to cover all three courts and LED lighting.

Many sports have been impacted heavily by Covid-19 restrictions but fortunately, and with the weather favourable, they were able to play throughout the season at their temporary home at Ard Scoil Mhuire.

This meant that members could regularly participate in a number of weekly sessions for adults, juniors and people with disabilities that were very well attended, often resulting in players having to wait to get a game. This also resulted in a renewed interest in playing tennis and club was delighted to be able to welcome many new members.

A Covid-19 Compliance Officer was appointed and adhered to official Government and Tennis Ireland Coronavirus guidelines. Although no tennis can be currently played due to level five restrictions the club looks forward to announcing a full programme of activities shortly for the 2021 season. Memberships are available for nominal fees and all are welcome to join.

For further information see <https://www.facebook.com/bsloetennisclub> or email [bsloetennis@gmail.com](mailto:bsloetennis@gmail.com) or call: Garry 085 112 4197, Joe 087 252 1424, Louise 087 135 3751 or Sarah 087 680 0598 (Junior and people with disabilities queries).

## BALLINASLOE IKKI KARATE UPDATE

Recently, Sensei Colin O'Connell after passing his ranking exam in town, has received his 3rd Dan degree black belt from the IKIF headquarters in Yokohama, Japan. Sensei Colin began his karate career in 1988 and ranked to 1st Dan in Toronto in 1994 under the Chief Instructor of Itosu-Kai Canada, Shihan Kei Tsumura. He also competed in the Canadian Itosu-Kai Karate Championships while in Toronto. Colin returned to Toronto in 2000 to rank to 2nd Dan and compete again in the Canadian Championships and received the Outstanding International Sensei award.

The IKKI association established in 1976 has had a strong competitive history over the year bringing great success. The pandemic has made this aspect of karate practically impossible, however, there was the opportunity of competing in an International Karate Kata competition in Japan in November. The Japan headquarters held a virtual tournament which was a first. There were 4 categories broken into age and gender. The IKKI entered 21 competitors competing in

28 events. The tournament had 400 entries.

From the Ballinasloe club competing were Nik Aimal Andik Najib, Caoimhe, Conor and Siofra Naughton, Oisín and Sean Keighery, Matthew and Nathan Blair, Ciaran O'Hara, Roisin McCauley, Ava and Mia Shanley, Ciaran and Liam Egan, Aaron Fortune and Leo Mulvany. IKKI clubs Kiltormer and Eyrecourt were represented by Sean Power, Eimear Porter, David Feury, Pamela Nee, Una Flynn and Marie Dolphin. The club gives their congratulations to all medal winners in which the club gathered four gold medals, five silver, and one bronze in a fine display.

Despite these difficult pandemic times, Karate in the community has kept active. The club holds zoom classes four nights a week catering for various skill levels. Chief Instructor, Leo Mulvany says classes are well attended and urges students to keep up their specific fitness, stretching, technical karate drills and most importantly keeping in touch socially albeit over the internet. The club is hoping to make a strong start to the new year with many more virtual competitions scheduled to take place during the new year.



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It's over seventy years ago since I entered the classroom of the late Pat Galvin, in St. Grellan's National School in Ballinasloe. I was a nervous 9-year-old and was not enthralled with the prospect of spending two years with the bespectacled teacher.

Patrick T. Galvin was a Ballygar native who started his career in the back of the Old Town Hall, in 1927, before moving to the new St. Grellan's Boys' School, when it opened in 1938. By the time I became his pupil he had spent nearly half his teaching life in Ballinasloe and had a reputation of being a "tough man."

With a certain amount of trepidation I settled into my desk and wondered what lay ahead. I subsequently learned that Pat Galvin seldom smiled, had long strides and frequently became frustrated when a pupil gave a stupid answer. He dished out the punishment in a fair and equal manner, something that other teachers in the school lacked.

Vivid memories keep coming back during my two-year stint of funny episodes, sarcastic remarks and the savage use of "the leather" when deserved. When Pat Galvin's patience wore thin he often remarked "I'd sooner be breaking stones on the side of the road with a mallet than trying to teach you lot" or addressing another student he would say "You are as thick as a double ditch the Land Commission would make, and that's pretty thick."

Despite his regular late night meetings, "Mockey" seldom missed class and was very compassionate when there was a knock on the door from a destitute person. As treasurer of the local St. Vincent de Paul, Pat would listen patiently to the visitor's plight before giving them "a few bob" or sometimes a red ten shilling note to help them on their way. It was then "back to the grind" trying to educate a sometimes rebellious class.

For twenty-nine years, Pat Galvin was a Fine Gael member of Galway Co. Council. First elected in 1950, he successfully contested every election before losing his seat to the late Joe Brennan in 1979. He was also a member of Ballinasloe Urban Council, having served as chairman during many terms. Oblivious of "your colour" in politics, Pat Galvin was regarded as the people's champion when



**MR. GALVIN'S RETIREMENT, MANAGEMENT AND STAFF**

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a favour was sought in regard to housing, employment etc.

A lover of the outdoor life, Pat enjoyed fishing and shooting but his real pastime was a game of cards. He organised Whist Drives in the school to raise funds for its upkeep and once arrived with two huge boxes of playing cards, all mixed up, which took "Tomball" Rankin and myself a full two days to put into correct packs of 52.

Pat Galvin retired from teaching in 1972, after giving 45 years of service, during which he saw about 1,500 young fellows witness his dedication, frustration and some patience in an attempt to prepare them for the outside world. At times it wasn't easy but I remember the Master as being tough but fair and for that I want to thank him.

The late school teacher passed away in March 1987 and is buried in Creagh Cemetery.

*A former pupil.*

## DIRTY OLD MUTTS AND NUTS

In the old days of Printing, all characters were individually picked from their allotted boxes in their cases, by the compositor, to set a line of type. This was a skilful, tedious and cold job as the lead letters, figures and spaces had just been put back in their boxes after being used in a previous job and on a cold, winter's day your hands could become numb, as you handled the smaller type. There were spaces between the words, while a double space was called an *En* and the space after a full stop was known as an *Em*, which was twice as wide as an *En*. To distinguish them they were affectionately known as *Mutts* (the Ems) and *Nuts* (the Ens).

Nowdays, the dirty old Mutts and Nuts no longer exist as graphic designers sit comfortably behind a computer and type their articles, in modern surroundings in print houses like KPW in Ballinasloe.

At KPW, a team six of designers, artists and sales people can now accommodate the needs of every customer without having to worry about Ems and Ens.



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# THE WARTIME TRIPS TO TOWN



Retired Fire Station Commander Bernard Larkin, a native of Kiltormer, was the accordion player in the famous Aughrim Slopes Ceili band. Currently residing in the townland of Derrymullen, he pens a warm recollection of wintertime trips to Ballinasloe town in the forties.

"Go catch the pony." The above order was gleefully received by many a young fellow in the 1940's because it heralded a trip to town. Visits to town were few and far between in the 1940's as it was War Time (Or the Emergency)

and money was scarce. Yet, certain tasks had to be done such as payment of rent and rates, (no electronic transfers in those days), so a trip to town was necessary a couple of times each year.

Now to the pony. I think he had a good idea when those trips were due because he immediately moved to the furthest end of the field and had to be coaxed to the middle by a fistful of oats in a tin basin. This always did the trick. It is always an equine treat to have oats. The big tub trap was then pulled out and the pony fitted with his harness (nicely cleaned and polished) and we were ready for the road.

The road itself deserving of a mention here for it was no shiny tarmac surface, but a loose sandy and sometimes potholed one. It was not until we reached about 3 miles from Town that a tarred road was encountered.

In Winter, this presented a problem in frosty weather as there was an ever-present danger of the pony slipping and

injuring himself or the passengers or breaking a shaft of the trap which would lead to an expensive visit to John Lyons, who was a coach builder in Dunlo Street. The slippage danger was countered by the fitting of the horseshoes with special frost nails which gripped the road surface and in later time, patent studs were used on the shoes.

Having negotiated the long slope of Brackernagh, the next step



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was to find stabling for the pony. At that time most public houses had a few stables in the yard for their country customers, and over the years most people became regulars at their favourite pub/grocery, as most pubs had a small grocery counter attached where the essentials could be purchased.

There was a kind of segregation practiced also where pubs in Dunlo Street catered for people from Clontuskert/Laurencetown/Kiltormer areas while Society Street accommodated those from Ahascragh/Kilconnell/Aughrim districts. Bridge St/River St catered for the "Roscommon people".

Some people would take a small sack of hay or maybe a pound or two of oats to fuel the pony for the journey home. The oats were fed by means of a nosebag which was a small sack that could be attached to the horse's head, then he could have lunch on demand. Some yards had a stable boy, usually a 12/13-year-old who kept an eye on things in the hope of a shilling or two of a tip in the evening. None of them became rich as a result of this, but it led to one story about a stable boy who burst into the bar where the animal's owner was having a glasheen with the following announcement. "Sir, sir, there's a hole in the horse's nosebag and the oats is falling out, it will be all gone before he has it half ate."

During the short Winter days, some provisions had to be made for the journey home. Lighting was one. Most traps were fitted with a pair of carriage lamps, nice square glass fronted units with a spring-loaded tube underneath into which was fitted a great big candle. This produced about one candle power which just about made it visible to the few other road users. Cars were such a novelty then



that there was always the danger of a pony taking fright at those strange machines.

Some standout memories from those visits to town were:

- The sight of bananas in Rafters' grocery shop window in Main Street after the War
- The visit to Dermot Connolly's (now Salmon's) shop where a whole big room was filled with toys in the weeks before Christmas.
- Being taken to the matinee in the Central Cinema on a wet Country Fair Day to see a Hopalong Cassidy film.
- The sight and sounds of hundreds of cattle being driven to the Railway sidings at Cleaghmore to be loaded on wagons, mostly going to Co. Meath.

The big adventure to town always ended with tired youngsters, parents and ponies ready for an early bed.



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In one of the oldest graveyards in the country, in Ballinacloogh, just outside Nenagh, the largest memorial commemorates Martin Hayden, the man that established Hayden's Hotel in Ballinasloe.

The son of a small farmer, Martin came to Ballinasloe, married a local lady, Margaret and they had two children, Josephine and Michael. Together they acquired Gill's Hotel, which had opened in 1803, and changed the name to Hayden's Hotel. It went on to become one of the leading establishments in the West of Ireland and during the Great October Fair the leading stockmen of Ireland and England made it their headquarters.

Throughout the year the ballroom hosted gatherings from all walks of life, from sumptuous dinners for the nobility, to charity events. Nationalist political meetings, such as Tenant Rights gatherings were hosted. On one occasion the renewal of the licence was opposed following suggestions that secret Fenian gatherings had been held there. Despite his commercial success, Martin Hayden did not forget the plight of his fellow country folk. His headstone refers to him as "a sincere and sterling patriot."

In April 1871 tragedy struck for the young Hayden family when Martin died suddenly at the age of 41. His children, Josephine was only six and Michael was five. Subsequently his wife Margaret took over the management of the hotel and on her death, the mantle passed to her daughter Josephine, who continued the family tradition. She never married, so on her death in 1930, the Hayden link ended. Josephine's brother, Michael became a solicitor and conducted a successful business in Society Street.

Martin Hayden, local man made good, had come back home to be buried. The young Hayden family were devastated. They had the world at their feet as they ran one of Ireland's most successful hotels- Hayden's of Ballinasloe.

The imposing Celtic cross in Ballinacloogh truly honours an outstanding local man who achieved so much in such a short life. His name will be for ever synonymous with one of Ballinasloe's oldest landmarks and renowned hostelrys.

The inscription on his headstone reads "Erected by Margaret Hayden in affectionate remembrance of her beloved husband, Martin Hayden, who died in Ballinasloe, 8th April 1871, age 41 years. He was a fond husband, a kind father, an enlightened and useful citizen, and a sincere and sterling Patriot. Pray for his eternal happiness that he may rise with the glorious resurrection of the just."

The O'Carroll family purchased Hayden's Hotel in 1945 but unfortunately the world-renowned 60-bed premises finally closed its doors in October 2016.



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According to Thom's Commercial Directory, published in 1966, Ballinasloe town had a population of 5,711, the Valuation was £24.308 and the Municipal Rate was 73 shillings. Thursday was a "half-holiday" and market day was Saturday.

The chairman of the Urban District Council was Martin J. Lynch, Patrick T. Galvin was vice-chairman and the other members were Thomas Boyle, Augustine Hynes, Patrick J. McDonnell, Mrs. M.R. Croffy, Charles Soden, Johnny Hurley and Michael O'Connor. The Town Clerk was H.F. Lyne, the Town Surveyor was P. C. O'Connor, Treasurer was Bank of Ireland and the District Medical Officer was Dr. G.M. Coyne.

The following establishments operated in the town 55 years ago. Auctioneers & Estate Agents-7, Bakers & Confectioners-4, Ballroom-1, Banks-3, Builders & Contractors-6, Builders' Providers-2, Cattle Dealer-1, Chemists-5, China, Glass & Earthenware-7, Cinemas-2, Confectionery (Sweets, etc.)-15, Cycle Dealers-3, Drapers-12, Egg Merchants-2, Electrical Appliances-7, Fancy Goods-4, Fertilizer Manufacturers-1, Footwear Retailiers-7, Fruiterers-8, Fuel Merchants-2, Funeral Undertakers-5.

Gate & Railing Manufacturers-1, General Merchants-32, Grocers (Wholesale)-2, Guest House-1, Hairdressers and Hairstylists (Ladies)-8, Hairdressers (Men's)-3, Hardware Merchants-8, Horsebox Manufacturer-1, Hotel-1, House Furnishers-4, Industrial Bankers & Finance House-1, Insurance Brokers-2, Ironfounders-1, Jewellery & Watches-2, Limestone Quarry-1, Livestock Salesmen-2,



MAIN STREET, BALLINASLOE

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Thom's Directory described Ballinasloe as "an inland town on the River Suck, on the main railway line from Dublin to Galway, noted for its great sheep, cattle and horse fair, held annually on the first Tuesday of October, and four succeeding days."

## FRANCES MOFFETT: A MEMOIR

Frances Moffett was born during the October Fair of 1900 in a house on the east side of Dunlo Street, Ballinasloe, where Dolan's electrical goods shop is at present located. The eldest of five children of a Presbyterian family, her father was a vet and her mother a former teacher. In 1985 she published a memoir, "I also am of Ireland", of the first 24 years of her life. An abridged version of the book was subsequently broadcast in serial form on BBC radio.

One of her earliest memories is of seeing the family home crowded with ladies in elegant gowns. In town for the annual Hunt Ball, they were accustomed to call to the house in Dunlo Street to change and rest because it was one of the few in Ballinasloe at the time to boast a bathroom and indoor flush toilet.

Up to the age of seven, Frances was educated at home by her mother, after which she was sent to a privately-run Presbyterian school in Mountpleasant. On fine days, Bridget, the family Catholic maid, took her on long walks, which sometimes included surreptitious visits to St. Michael's Church and the Convent of Mercy. These had to be carefully concealed from her mother who



would have strongly disapproved of her young daughter's frequenting such "places of error and superstition". Frances recalled how one Sunday her grandfather, a sabbatarian Scot, had angrily pulled down the blinds in his house overlooking the Fair Green to blot out the sight of Catholics "desecrating the Lord's Day" by playing sports and larking about. Though her parents were fairly tolerant in matters of religion, in some insidious way she soon learnt to almost despise Roman Catholics, and indeed a favourite diversion of hers and her siblings' was to climb to the top of the back wall of the garden and exchange sectarian taunts in rhyme with the ragged Catholic children of Tea Lane.

On 18th December 1908 the family moved to Gention Hill, a seaside location some miles west of Galway, the train journey taking two and a half hours. Frances attended the High School, an institution under Presbyterian management, but after a year her mother, dissatisfied with the standard of instruction, withdrew her and placed her in the Model School, which was purpose-built for the training of Protestant pupil teachers. The years that followed until the First World War were regarded by Frances as the halcyon days of her life, in spite of some ups and downs. Weather permitting, her free time was usually spent in sea bathing or in botanizing near the shore under her mother's knowledgeable

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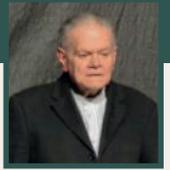
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guidance. A highpoint of those years was a family trip to Dublin on the occasion of the visit of King George V and Queen Mary on 8th July 1911. The royal procession was viewed from a balcony of Clery's department store on O'Connell Street.

Gentian Hill, notwithstanding its attractions, was proving to be unsuited to her father's practice: it was an inconvenient distance from town and there were no stables where sick animals could be treated and housed. A decision was taken to move to Wellpark near Lough Atalia on the other side of the city.

With the outbreak of the Great War, Frances' father, having volunteered for the Royal Veterinary Corps, was sent to France where he remained for the duration of hostilities. Frances won a place in King Edward VI Grammar School for Girls in Birmingham, and travelled there on 14th September 1914, boarding with her aunt and uncle. She liked the school and was an enthusiastic participant in all out-of-class activities. However, her mother brought her home at the start of the 1915 summer vacation to complete her secondary education in Galway because attacks by German submarines were making the Irish Sea crossing increasingly hazardous and there seemed to be no prospect of an early end to the conflict.

When it did eventually end on 11th November 1918, Armistice Day, Frances wore a red, white and blue ribbon in her hair in honour of the occasion. As she wheeled her bicycle up Prospect Hill, a woman emerged from a doorway and flung the contents of a bucket of soapy water in her direction, drenching her skirt and calling her a name that reflected on her moral character. That night several windows in her home were smashed in a fusillade of stones after she and her siblings had hoisted a Union Jack through an attic window. Fortunately the family suffered no further molestation in the turbulent years that followed, if one discounts a fruitless raid for guns and ammunition by Irregulars during the Civil War.

In early December 1918, Frances, her mother and younger brother contracted the Spanish flu, with fatal consequences in her mother's case. She had passed the Irish Senior Grade Certificate, having credits in the right subjects to give her exemption from the entrance examination to Trinity College, but with her mother dead it was now impossible for her to leave home since there would be no one to keep house and care for the younger children. She had the frustrating experience of engaging a series of maids who either had the tiresome habit of becoming pregnant out of wedlock and leaving without giving notice or were hopeless drunkards she had to dismiss.

To attend University College Galway a pass in Irish, a subject she had never studied, was necessary. In February 1919, Frances started to learn Irish for the matriculation examination. She tried to enlist the aid of some local native speakers, but these were of little help since they were illiterate in the language. A teacher on the staff of St. Mary's College was recommended to her, and to avail of his lessons she was obliged to cycle five miles to his home. Frances failed at her initial attempt in June but succeeded in the September exam, and began her first semester in UCG the following month, taking as her subjects for the BA experimental physics, mathematics and English.

At that time there was a college official known at the Lady Superintendent tasked with overseeing the appearance, dress, and general conduct of women students both on and off campus. Frances was carpeted by this official who took exception to the way she wore her hair, loose and shoulder-length, as shown in our photograph. She was ordered to adopt a style more appropriate for a female undergraduate. In an effort to conform, Frances pinned up her hair. Next day, however, a mischievous male student, seated behind her in a lecture hall, stuck a ruler in her coiffure, causing the hairpins to fly out and her hair to cascade down, resuming its former aspect.

Making her way along College Road in November 1920, Frances was frightened when a motorized patrol of Black and Tans fired a volley of shots over her head. On arrival home she was handed a note from a friend inviting her to tea at 6.00pm when she would be expected to help entertain an unexpected guest. That evening she was shocked to discover that the guest was in fact a Black and Tan. He turned out, however, to be a polite young Scot who told her that he had only joined the force because he could find no other employment, and expressed his utter revulsion at the criminal behaviour of many of his fellow constables.

After Frances had graduated in September 1922, to her surprise, she has offered the post of head mistress of the High School where she had already done some part-time teaching. At first she declined, believing she had insufficient experience, but relented when told that the school would have to close for want of suitable staff unless she accepted.

Unfortunately, less than two years later she was diagnosed with tuberculosis, a disease that had claimed the lives of three of her maternal uncles before she was born. Three months' treatment in Switzerland was prescribed, which luckily she had just enough money saved to pay for. Frances left Galway on the first day of 1924, hoping to return at Easter. This was not to be. Her course of treatment in Switzerland completed, she was admitted to a sanatorium in England where she remained teaching the child patients until 1932. She stayed in the teaching profession another four years, then trained for full-time work in the Church of England, later becoming Vice-Principal of a Women's Theological College. Retiring from church work in 1960, she returned to teaching in schools and a College of Education.

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## PAUL SPENCER – GENEROUS RUGBY CLUB MEMBER BY LIAM COURTNEY



It was with great shock and deep sadness that the club and community learned of the sudden and untimely passing of our esteemed colleague Paul Spencer on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> of December last. Paul was a much loved and active member of Ballinasloe RFC for more than twenty years, right up to the time of his death.

He served in many roles over the seasons from under-age coaching to club President for 2005/2006. Though a coach of some repute, it was mainly as an administrator that he busied himself in club activities. Indeed, he was the current minutes secretary on the committee.

Born in Plumstead in the U.K. and a Chartered Quantity Surveyor by profession, he was a playing member and coach at Old Aldwinians Rugby Club in Manchester prior to returning for a second and final time to live in Ballinasloe with his wife Rita (Jordan) and family. He loved residing in this area and was in the final stages of gaining Irish citizenship.

His interest in sport extended beyond rugby, however, and he was a lifelong follower of Everton FC in soccer as well as a keen golfer, playing as regularly as time would allow him. He had a great passion for music and played bass guitar with a dance band called the Brass Farthings, which he joined while at school in London.

Paul was a fine humanitarian and apart from being a member of the Ballinasloe Lions Club he also paid many visits to Belarus, working with local charities in construction programmes. He was most affable and approachable and always glad to give professional advice when requested. He was involved in the restoration of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Creagh as well as being on the project team that oversaw the new astro-turf playing area recently installed at the rugby club.

The many of us fortunate enough to have shared his friendship and good humour and been beneficiaries of his generosity of spirit through the years, will miss him greatly.

To Rita and their family, we again extend our deepest sympathy.

## MAUREEN O'MALLEY – NOTED EDUCATOR BY WILLIAM DUTHIE

Maureen O'Malley (nee O'Brien) was born in 1932 in Corkscrew Hill – and she was very proud of her Clare origins. Her father was a well-respected farmer whose advice on many subjects was much sought after by his neighbours while her mother worked at home and on the farm.

Maureen had two siblings, a brother Traolach, a farmer and Mairead who was a nun – both deceased. They attended the local national school and the girls went on to secondary school in Ennis. Maureen studied at University College, Galway from where she graduated, qualified as a secondary school teacher specialising in Mathematics and with a keen interest in, and a gra for her native language.

Her first post was in Dunmore where she met her husband-to-be John. From Dunmore they moved to Ballinasloe in the sixties and Maureen joined the staff of La Sainte Union in Banagher, Co. Offaly where she became Deputy Principal, retiring in 1997.

During this time she and John had six children (including twins), so she was a busy mother and housewife as well as an excellent teacher who took an active interest in all her students encouraging them to work diligently and achieve the best grades possible.

Her home was busy but always welcoming to the many visitors – children's friends, family and relatives, where freshly baked tarts for the frequent card games were the order of the day.

Once retired, her interest in education (inherited from both her parents) and her former pupils was undimmed, but was extended to the next generation - her 16 grandchildren who carried her

coffin with pride. During this period she had an annual foreign holiday with her late school friend Noreen Briscoe, where they visited many European countries and cities.

She spent her last few years well looked after by the kind staff of Mountbellew Nursing Home.

Finally, she was a wonderful friend and neighbour who will be sadly missed by her family and many friends and former teaching colleagues.

Predeceased by her husband John and son Cathal. Our condolences to Liam, Mairead, Niamh, Grainne and John, daughters-in-law Annaline, Marguerite and Fiona, sons-in-law Jim, TJ and Donal, cherished grandchildren, cousins.

*Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam*



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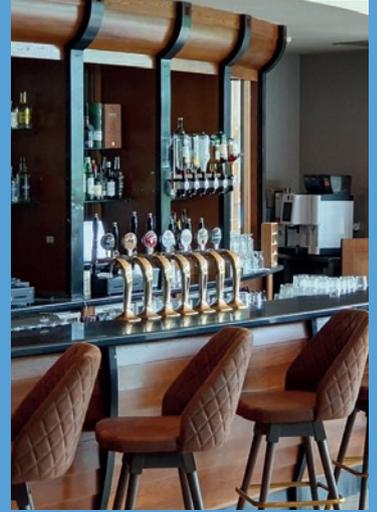


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