

BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

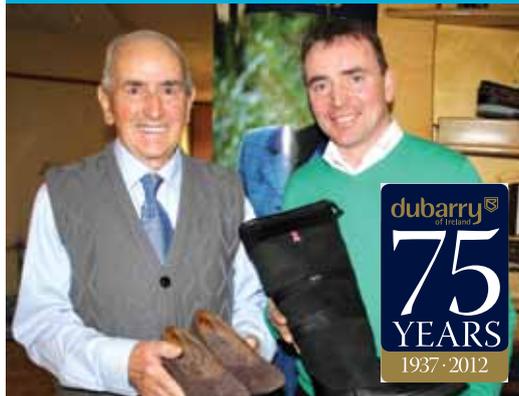
Vol 2 Issue 1 April/May 2012



COUNTY FOOTBALL PANELLIST KEITH KELLY



DUBARRY CELEBRATE THEIR 75th ANNIVERSARY



TÁNAISTE RETURNS FOR GARBALLY AWARDS



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AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol 2 Issue 1 April/May 2012

RÉAMHRÁ



A small smugness of satisfaction is allowed in this edition – we have reached the end of a successful pilot phase and are proceeding with volume 2. Not bad, especially if we had taken some of the earlier advice proffered at the start!

Chairman Seamus has done a lot of thanking and rightly so but to yours truly – it is the young reporters who have battled to extract the marrow from the bone, in difficult conditions, that are the heroes of the project. In years to come we will

hopefully be as proud of their professional achievements as we have been of the apprenticeship. To Ruairi, Caitriona and Barra, Mile Buiochas. To Dave our Designer and the team at KPW, well done also and to our loyal and growing band of subscribers, advertisers, special contributors, photographers and you, our readers, buiochas o chroi. We had our first PRO Briefing last month and it was heartening to witness a lot of the genuine compliments and encouraging suggestions, please use our Facebook page to do more of the same. St. Brigid's is fast becoming a hobby horse of mine, features on the front cover. From time to time we will be featuring iconic buildings.

We need as a community to learn more about the institution and we need to find a way to utilise its legacy. The Ada English Spring School is as good a place as any to make a start. Reviewing the presentations made at last year's inaugural event and mirroring the selfless dedication to the country and its people by all the patriots of the period 1890 – 1930 – shows up in nasty counterbalance the chicanery as reported by Mahon Tribunal. "Shure they were all at it" has now been proved. What we are all going to do about it, is really the key question.

*Le gach Dea Ghuí.
Colm Croffy, Editor*



"Community" as explained in the Oxford dictionary - "Smallest unit of local Government, a group of people having cultural, religious, or other characteristics in common." It is the Buzz word used by Politicians, CEO's, academia and people in general during the current economic crisis. There was evidence of this "community spirit" locally by the loyalty shown to local business people in the run in to Christmas by a general increase in sales compared to the previous year but this sense

of loyalty should not be parked for another 10 months. We all need to consider what we contribute to make this a better community. No one individual or organisation has the capacity to make this seismic shift that is required but by everybody doing their own piece it will make a difference.

Ballinasloe Community Crèche opened a fine new building in recent weeks, The Vault youth centre have relaunched, the Tidy Towns Committee are re-energising for the Spring and a big effort was put in to making St. Patrick's weekend a big success with large numbers of people coming out and enjoying themselves.

A delegation from BACD Limited recently attended a conference in the UK entitled "Thriving alongside Supermarkets" and based on what we saw and heard various levels of success are evident and it is possible to have a vibrant town centre. Based on the UK experience we need to identify what is unique about Ballinasloe and capitalise on these advantages. It is a growing reality that more people do their shopping online but you cannot buy good quality personal service and aftercare with the click of a mouse. I will elaborate further on what was discussed at the conference at our Annual General Meeting in the Enterprise Centre on the 18th April. Hopefully we'll see you there.

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

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Local Caltra Native Returns For Secondary School Awards



Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

An Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and the third highest elected office in the State, Eamon Gilmore T.D. was guest of honour at the Garbally Alumni Awards recently - Ballinasloe Life caught up and asked him some questions.

A lot of people may not know that you were born and raised in Caltra, just outside Ballinasloe. Tell us a little bit about where you are from and your upbringing?

I was born on a small mixed farm, tillage, milking cattle. My father John worked at various things, including forestry, as well as the farm. When I was fourteen months old, and my mother was pregnant with my brother John, he died suddenly. My paternal grandmother moved in with my mother and brother John and was a very strong influence on my life. Education was extremely important to my mother and she was determined that John and I received a good education. I attended Caltra National School which was a small two teacher school, where we were educated mainly through Irish and after receiving a scholarship, to board in Garbally College.

What was it like as a boarder in Garbally College and how did the values instilled in you there, shape your political career?

I went at the age of twelve and was a boarder there for five terms. I received a very good education and I have very happy memories of it. I went in a very shy, quiet young fellow and came out of it a very confident young man with an opinion on everything and I haven't looked back since!

I believe the key lesson I took from my time there was to think for myself. The ethos of the school was about cultivating independence, not simply obedience which was unusual at the time. One teacher in particular, Joe Cassidy, was particularly influential. He taught me how to speak in public and to have the confidence to do so. He impressed on me the power of language to inspire, persuade and this I have taken with me through my political career.

How did you get into politics, was there anything in particular from your Caltra upbringing or days at Garbally that really inspired you to become a politician?

There was always discussion of current affairs at home and in Garbally. We were always encouraged to debate what was happening. I got involved in the Students Union in Galway. This arose following a threat from the College officials that the Psychology course I was studying was going to be discontinued and my classmates and I would have to finish our course in Trinity. A group of us got together to stop this, we were

successful and one thing led to another and I found myself running for the SU where I became President. After that I was elected President of USI. However it wasn't until later when I was married and working as a Trade Union official that I was approached by former MEP Proinsias De Rossa who encouraged me to run for Dun Laoghaire Borough Council. I wasn't successful in my first run but I was the next time out.

Do you make it home often?

I'm in Ballinasloe very often as my family home is in Caltra and I go back there as often as I can. My wife comes from Killimor so between the two of us we've lots of relatives and friends from the area and I enjoy going back.

Ballinasloe has experienced high rates of increased unemployment and has an over reliance on public sector health care employment. What government strategy do you suggest will be of most benefit over the term of your Government?

As far as I'm concerned, jobs are not about statistics. Every job lost is one too many. Every person who leaves the country to find work, because they have to, is one too many. We recently had some encouraging news from the CSO - on a seasonally adjusted basis, the last 3 months of 2011 saw the first quarterly rise in employment in 4 years - employment rose by 10,000 in the last quarter of 2011. We are also starting to see some genuinely positive signs in some sectors, with notable increases in the numbers employed in the industrial, accommodation and food services sectors in the final quarter of last year.

But there are still 300,000 people unemployed and we all know this is one of the most pressing problems that we face. There is no silver bullet or magic wand, just hard graft, day after day. For employment to grow, and investment in the economy to happen, there has to be stability. Stabilising the economy, bringing certainty back for investors, and for consumers, has been our main focus in the first year in Government.

From day one, we have brought forward a number of measures to help tackle the problem; we brought in a jobs initiative focused on jobs-intensive services like tourism, a school building and road repair programme and home retrofitting, we brought in jobs bridge - an internship for young people which has met its target enrolment, brought in a budget that reduced the deficit, but also protected

family incomes, and which contained measures to promote enterprise and stabilise the property market. We have set up the strategic investment fund and new era and we are working to develop them as vehicles for investment.

We also secured agreement from the Troika to use proceeds of state asset disposals for reinvestment; we have published our Jobs Action Plan which is focused on improving conditions for job creation. It takes a targeted, sectoral approach to what needs to be done to grow employment in the food sector, in the green economy, in digital gaming, financial services etc.

These and other measures we are rolling out will I hope help the people of East Galway and South Roscommon as much as people from other parts of the Country and I would say to the people who are struggling to bear with us. We are as a Government doing everything we can to restore the economy in this country.

Minister Phil Hogan promises radical reform of local government. Ballinasloe has a Town Council, what are your views on these developments? Do you think Town Councils will have any role in the delivery of services going forward?

The issue of local government reform is on the agenda and I don't think there is any secret that the future of town councils is back in the spotlight. I'm very aware of the importance of town councils and I want to be sure that whatever reform is discussed that it is in the best interests of the people. Where local communities have more of a say in transport, traffic, educational infrastructure, economic



At the recent Garbally College awards night were (L-R): Paul Owens, Colm Croffy, Tánaiste Eamonn Gilmore, Comedian Tommy Tiernan and Pat Molloy.

development and so on that directly affect their local community.

Between the two schools, Garbally College and Ard Scoil Mhuire, over 220 students will sit their Leaving Certificate; many of them face the daunting reality of emigration. What is your advice to them?

It's heartbreaking to see people leaving this country because of a lack of opportunity and I am working and will work night and day to ensure such opportunities return quickly to these shores. For the students sitting their Leaving Certificate I wish them every success with their studies and would encourage them to look at all the further education options open to them so that they can avail of the jobs that I am confident will be available when the recovery comes and I am confident that it will come.

The Labour Party has had a remarkable success rate in the East Galway area. With local elections in 2014, how do you think the Labour Party will fair?

One of my proudest political moments was when the Labour Party took a Dáil seat in Galway East through Colm Keaveney. He is an excellent and hard working public representative and along with Senator Lorraine Higgins and our very fine councillors in Galway East, including Cllr. Johnny Walsh, who joined the Party in February, leave me very optimistic for the future of the Labour Party in East Galway.

Labour's success in the Local and Euro Elections in 2014 will come down to a number of issues including how people feel we are doing in Government but it will also come down to the hard work put in by individual candidates in the lead into these elections. 

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Dubarry's 75th Anniversary

Writes Ken Kelly

One of the world's leading shoe manufacturers this year celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of their factory in Ballinasloe.

Dubarry, who now operate from their plant at Glentane, on the east side of the town, initially set up manufacturing in part of the Old Workhouse, at Sarsfield Road, on the west side of Ballinasloe, way back in 1937 but moved "across the Suck" in 1988.

But the history of the town's biggest industrial employer, for many years, goes back further. It was on 14th October 1936 that a meeting was held in Hayden's Hotel after the local Chamber of Commerce had investigated the possibility of attracting an industry to Ballinasloe. The meeting sought intending subscribers to a company, which was about to be

What's in a Name?

Ever wondered where the name "Dubarry" came from? Well it seems way back in 1768 a French lady named Jeanne Becu married Count Guillaume Du Barry, thus becoming Madame Du Barry. Born in Lorraine, France, the illegitimate daughter of Anne Becu, she was described as "a remarkably attractive woman who used her looks to take several aristocratic men as lovers."

Madame Du Barry went on to become one of France's well-known courtesans, as well as the mistress of Louis XV. Due to her association with the King of France, Madame Du Barry enjoyed high status and privilege within the French court for many years.

The founders of the Ballinasloe shoe factory wanted to be different from other Irish brand names and felt the company needed a continental European flavour for their enterprise. After some research, it was decided upon "Dubarry", in memory of Madame Du Barry. So now the Dubarry name is almost 250 years old and going stronger than ever.



90-year-old Mattie McNally, one of the first employees of Dubarry in 1937, proudly shows off the first pair of shoes manufactured at the Sarsfield Road plant while his son, Matthew, who is in charge of Customer Relations at Dubarry, holds one of the new Galway Country Boots of which 250 pairs will be offered for sale on this 75th Anniversary Year, with the all proceeds going to Breast Cancer Research.

formed, for the purpose of manufacturing high-class shoes. A draft of the proposed agreement with Mr. A.E. Brody of Dubarry Shoemakers, London was read at the meeting, which was chaired by Mr. Michael Connolly.

Subscribers representing £2,400 were present and the total amount of subscriptions promised to date amounted to £3,600. Four subscribers were elected as trustees, to act for the general body, pending the registration of the company. They, in addition to Mr. Brody, were Messrs. James L. Cullen, William Rourke, Owen Larkin and Michael Connolly, would be the first directors of the company when formed.

It was decided at this meeting to apply to the Minister for Industry and Commerce for a loan of £5,000, under the Trade Loans Act and the National Bank in Ballinasloe were appointed Bankers.

So that set in motion the arrival of a team, led by Mr. J. F. Scott, who been in the shoe manufacturing business in Britain, to train local people at their new factory in Sarsfield Road in Ballinasloe. Production started on 3rd March 1937 and gradually employment rose to nearly three hundred people, over the years.

The local involvement and the huge contribution made by the Scott family has never been forgotten in the town, where often up to five members of the same family would be working under the

one roof. The commitment shown and the relations between management and staff resulted in Dubarry manufacturing top-quality products for the home and export market for more than three-quarters of a century.

In 1983 there was a management buy-out, led by the present Managing Director Eamon Fagan and five years later Dubarry moved their operation to a purpose-built factory at Glentane. It has been a long road and many changes along the way since Chrissie Shanley made the first pair of shoes in 1937 in the Old Workhouse building. Now Dubarry can boast of the British Royalty wearing their country boots, the Volvo Ocean Race entrants insisting on using Dubarry sailing boots as well as top TV presenters modelling the latest Dubarry clothing styles. The company now export to twenty-seven different countries where their country boots and sailing boots are in big demand.

Throughout its history, Dubarry have always been acknowledged as a supporter of worthy causes, none more that when employees were hit by tragedy or sickness. Now to celebrate their 75th anniversary, the company intend raising €75,000 for Breast Cancer Research by offering a limited edition of their country and sailing boots to the general public to purchase. Every cent raised will be donated to this worthy cause-another admirable contribution.

75th Target

To mark their 75th Anniversary, Dubarry intend raising €75,000 for Breast Cancer Research by offering a limited edition of their Galway country and Ultima sailing boots to the public. Each purchase made will be acknowledged by way of a Special Certificate, signed by both the National Breast Cancer Research Institute and Dubarry of Ireland. The sailing boots and the Galway country boots, which are synonymous with the Volvo Ocean Race, will each feature the famous Pink Ribbon—the universally recognised symbol of International Breast Cancer Research.



Above: Pictured at the blessing and unveiling of a statue to Our Lady at the Dubarry Factory in Sarsfield Road in 1954, to mark the Marian Year were, from left: Bert Boswell (Staff); Very Rev. Fr. W. Cummins, Adm.; Jim Cullen (Director), Most Rev. Dr. William Philbin, Bishop of Clonfert; J.F. Scott (Managing Director); Fr. John Kelly C.C., Albert Headd (Staff) and Joe Higgins (Staff).

dubarry 
of Ireland



A section of the attendance at the blessing and unveiling of the Marian Year statue, which was attended by Management, Staff and Townspeople. Workers at the factory contributed one shilling per week each, over many months, to have the statue purchased and erected.

Raftery Motors Now Caters for Four National Dealerships

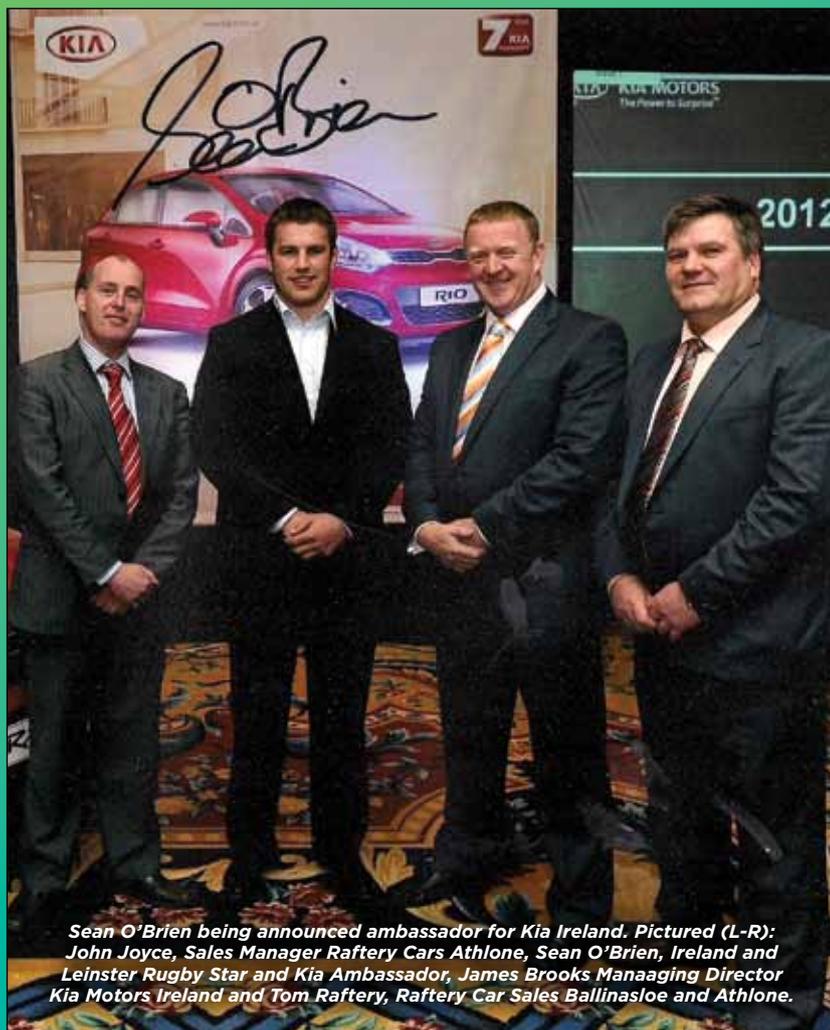
Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Tom Raftery Car Sales have been in business in Clonfad, Ballinasloe for over 20 years and pride themselves with offering customers services second to none. They have a modern showroom and workshop with fully qualified staff always on hand to serve your motoring needs. Tom and his sales team are now the main car and jeep dealers for Kia, Daihatsu and Isuzu in Roscommon, Galway, Offaly and Westmeath and are located on Shannonbridge Road, Ballinasloe and in Monksland, Athlone.

They also sell the very popular range of Peugeot vehicles and were honoured to be awarded the Kia franchise in 2010. Tom opened a spacious showroom in Athlone in 2007 to cater for their growing customer in the west and midlands.

Raftery Car Sales also sell the Isuzu range of light commercials and jeeps. So if it is Sales spare parts or services you are looking for, look no further than Tom Raftery Car Sales Ballinasloe and Athlone. A full range of new cars are on show in their state of the art showrooms with great scrappage deals available on all trade-ins. All used cars come with free one year RAC (roadside assistance).

Also coming soon to their service department is an easy pay system for services, spread the cost over 12, 24 or 36 months. Contact them today to get details on this new unbelievable offer. They have brilliant services club which is free to enter and offers €120 off your fourth service. All makes and models are catered for, you should consider joining. The Showroom open hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm and Saturday 9.30am to 3pm.



Sean O'Brien being announced ambassador for Kia Ireland. Pictured (L-R): John Joyce, Sales Manager Raftery Cars Athlone, Sean O'Brien, Ireland and Leinster Rugby Star and Kia Ambassador, James Brooks Managing Director Kia Motors Ireland and Tom Raftery, Raftery Car Sales Ballinasloe and Athlone.

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Best Awards Prize Winners

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Ballinasloe Entrepreneurial Skills Tournament (BEST) had their award ceremony in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel with special guest Minister of State for Training and Skills, Ciaran Cannon attending on the night.

This year the event attracted more than 81 entries. This was split about 60/40 between the two secondary schools in the town Garbally College and Ard Schoil Mhuire, with 12 qualifying for the final stage.

Judges for the programme were Mrs. Mary Molloy, a former school principal, member of school Management Boards with a keen interest in business and education. Mr. John M. Power who currently operates a successful management company specialising in start up business ventures and finally Mr. Declan Lenehan founder and CEO of Europharma Concepts based in Clara. Mr Lenehan is a Chemist and an expert in enzymes. His Company has developed 60 new products and supplies products to ALDI, ASDA and many others.

There was a wide range of projects on display at the event ranging from Bio Projects, Green/Environment, Games, Agricultural, Phone Apps and Music to name but a few.

The BEST competition is not only an event to highlight the attributes of young entrepreneur's ideas and talents but also caters for the contestant after the competition by helping them to secure patents for their ideas, help with trademarks, designs and copyrights.

Prize Winners were as follows

Judges Award (€150 + Cert)

- Pearse Coffey - Work Station
- Ros McKeon - Generator & heat exchanger
- Holly Burdess/Bronwyn Latham - Braille Piano/Keyboard
- Alan Kelly - Light under the bonnet etc
- Andrei Pirghie/Lucian Brooks/Michael Burnell - Xylopot
- Rachael Coen - Fuel phone App



The Runner Up with a €500 prize + Certificate were Diarmuid Claffey and Paul Regan with their "Bull i-mobiliser" An electronic chip built into the ring in the nose of bulls which enables a farmer send a shock to stun the bull. They displayed a technical specification and drawing for the product and had it well costed. They also had done detailed research with Farming Organisations, HAS and others.



The outright winners with a whopping €1000 prize fund and Certificate were Sean Deane, Jacob Walshe and Ronan Kelly with their very clever invention the "Load & Lock System for front loaders." This team presented a safety system for front loaders. It came as a surprise to the judges that this problem existed and the boys showed the major tragedies caused by such shortcomings. The team presented a strong technical and personal solution. It was very well researched idea and with this the judges deemed them to be the winners.

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Horse Fair to Feature in *Three Colours Green* German TV Show



Ballinasloe International Horse Fair is featured in a specially commissioned German Speaking Documentary *Drei Farben Grün (Three Colours Green)* reflecting on the wild Ireland - rough coast, harsh weather, the lush Ireland - gulf stream, gardens etc. and the mild Ireland - mild climate, midlands. Filmed by Jan Tenhaven a renowned writer and director, the series was commissioned by the French-German arts channel ARTE for a three part series on Ireland and was shot with the assistance of the Fair and Festival Committee during last years event. The episodes are 45 minutes long, with broadcast dates on the 23rd, 24th and 25th April 2012 in both Germany and France. The programme slot is called *Entdeckung (Discovery)*, so it is about discovering new sides of a country. The Show enjoys an audience of approximately 4 million viewers in Germany and France. Check it all out on www.tiny.cc/jantenhaven.

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Town Indoor Country Market

A large number of people joined Senator Michael Mullins when he officially opened the Ballinasloe Indoor Market which is located at the Ballinasloe Town Hall, It is open every Friday from 9am to 2pm.

Every Friday
9am - 2pm



Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Every Friday morning the Town Hall theatre is a hive of activity, as local producers, bakers, craftspeople, plant sellers, knitters, jewellery makers and more unload their wares for the weekly Country Market.

Already in its third month, there has been a fantastic warm response from customers. There is a friendly buzz about the place as people meet for a chat and can avail of a cup of tea or coffee while they browse through the tables. The Country Market concept differs from the current popular farmers' markets in that it is a co-op and the aim is to provide, as much as possible, locally and ethically produced products.

Looking through the tables, it is quite easy to be tempted by the wonderful sight of freshly baked scones, chocolate and coffee cakes, various jams, porter cakes, lemon drizzle cake

and tarts galore. There is always a surprise and something different every Friday. There are sticks for the fire and a dazzling display of primulas from Creagh Training Centre. For someone special there are beautiful prints, handmade jewellery and a stunning collection of felt brooches.

Catching up with Anne Byrne, organiser of the Country Market she states, "We believe Country Markets fill a niche in communities badly in need of reconnection, and in Ballinasloe where better than the Town Hall Theatre. Here we've already heard many lovely stories of the dances that were had here many years ago, it has also spent time as a cinema and now produces some of the best musicals in the West. We also believe that food grown and produced locally is simple, sustainable and safe. It generates local interest and income and brings people together and that in our Country Market is a good thing." Every Friday from 9am to 2pm.

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UTAH Delivers the Best Value

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Fresh from Marina Point to the heart of the town centre - Val Colleran's UTAH outlet comprising over three floors, 13 Departments and 9,000 square feet of quality retail brands is a brash new addition to shopping life in the town Centre. Birchgrove native and stalwart Pearse's Supporter Val Colleran is the proprietor and is very happy with the move. "We needed extra space to cope with what our loyal customers were looking for and this premises, on a bustling street was exactly what we needed."

"Our secret to be able to stock top quality fashion brands - across the full range is in being able to deal direct with the international suppliers and passing the value on. We do our price comparisons regularly and we are upto 60% of the retail prices on the high street". Val brings 24 years of retailing

to the role and he has a team of 6 staff to keep the Designer Brand Outlet open seven days a week including 1 to 5 on Sundays and late till 7 pm. On Friday. The store boasts the largest display of quality boutique ladie's fashions, handbags, accessories and fashion jewellery in the Mid West. The store also retails plus sizes up to 24 with new arrivals daily. In the children's section Diesel, Regatta, Name IT jostle for rail space with other up to the minute fashions. They cater for the newborns all the way to 14 years. In the Menswear Department most of the range stocked is for casual outdoor wear, comfort including Kingpin, Diesel, Outrage and Crosshatch. However it was out of interior household fashions that UTAH first made its mark and it continues to stock one of the most extensive Blinds and Curtains collection in the region. "We offer a full made to measure service for the blinds, we offer a free consultation, no obligation quote to



all our clients" states Val. Whilst fitting any window, any room with any budget, UTAH can also provide a vast array of household linens, bedding, throws and a very modern and keenly priced giftware range. "We are delighted with response from town centre shoppers so far, we will be rolling out more lines and services over the coming months and until the summer we are offer a free 30 minute parking ticket to anyone who wants to shop with us." says Val.

This Issue's Front Photo - St. Brigid's Hospital

Connacht District Lunatic Asylum, now St. Brigid's Hospital, opened in 1833 and was one of the earliest of the Irish district asylums. The Grade One (only one of 2 in the country at the time) was designed along the Bentham Concept of the panopticon, similar to Kilmainham Gaol and Mountjoy prison. Designed by the Architect Johnson, building commenced in 1830 and the doors opened for 150 patients in 1833. It was intended for the care of "curable lunatics" and opened in a spirit of optimism with regard to its progressive role in public health. Its history, however, is one of continual struggle: to

prevent the admission of unsuitable cases, to secure additional funding and to offer reasonable standards of care under difficult conditions. In common with the majority of other District Asylums, it was continually overcrowded, housing in November 1900, for example, 1,165 patients in accommodation designed to hold 840. The Icon Building on the Eastern approach to town is now disused and lying dormant. The Ada English Spring school on the 4th and 5th of May is hosting an inaugural exhibition of memorabilia from the hospital and will be exploring some of the legacy issues.

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BACD Delegation Attend Action for Market Towns in UK

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

A BACD contingent made the journey to Alton Hampshire in England to attend A Day Seminar on "Towns Alive Thriving alongside Supermarkets" run by Action for Market Towns.

The Action for Market Towns Programme was set up to counteract the growing trends of dwindling numbers of footfall and closure of retail businesses in town centres all over the UK.

The BACD delegation of Seamus Duffy, Cathal Concannon and Kevin White attended the meeting to see what action ideas and observations could be used for the redevelopment of the market town with a new vision for our town centre.

Over 35 towns from all over England were represented at the conference with Ballinasloe the only representatives from Ireland. We are now a registered member and will keep in touch with developments across the water.

Most of the towns were similar in size to us but with smaller catchment areas i.e. Alton, Southam and Faversham with all at different stages of development. The starting point for all these towns was to accept that there is "no going back."

Every town needed to identify its uniqueness and respect and celebrate

that difference. Successful local centres are about much more than shopping, they are about enjoyment, creativity, learning, socialising, culture, health and wellbeing and democratic enjoyment.

Some examples of initiatives which helped towns thrive were developing local produce/craft markets, holding free events in public spaces, routine maintenance of empty commercial properties, improved signage, maps available for local walks, more hanging baskets and focus on community services run from town centres.

If town centres are to survive and thrive again, the people of the towns need to think more radically and more intelligently about their future. Towns are changing and some of those changes are permanent. The main street of yesterday didn't have to compete with Amazon and out-of-town shopping centres.

Action for Market Towns vision is that main streets and town centres that are fit for the 21st century need to be multifunctional social centres, not just competitors for stretched consumers. They must offer irresistible opportunities and experiences that do not exist elsewhere.

They need to be rooted in the interests and needs of local people, and be able to

meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. If the people of a town are to put the heart back into their local centres, they have to seize the opportunity to innovate what the current crisis presents.

The visiting group were impressed with the level of joined up thinking prevalent in the towns that were making huge comebacks and the various elements of activity and promotions used to lure the out of town shopper back into the centre of once thriving commercial streets. "Remember that if you are not talking your town up, you are talking it down."

AMT's Policy Manager, Alison Eardley, said: "What the future holds for town centres is a concern shared by the majority of our members here in the UK especially in light of the recent recession and the continuing strain on consumer spending.

Action for Market Towns has always championed the important multi-faceted role that the town centre plays and has been working with communities on a wide range of initiatives such as benchmarking, tourism development, retail competitiveness and accessibility."

The deputation are making a full report on the seminar and the translatable ideas to the BACD AGM on April 18th at the Enterprise Centre at 8.00pm.



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Local Headstone Business Supporting Irish Heart Foundation

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Liffey Memorials, a headstone business in the town, has teamed up with the Irish Heart Foundation in an effort to raise funds to support the charity. Liffey Memorials is owned and directed by two locals, Darren Raftery and Mark Forde. The business has been in the locality for the last number of years. The nature of their business forces Darren and Mark to confront sorrow and loss daily. They wanted to be able to support their customers in a productive way. For this reason, Liffey Memorials has partnered with the Irish Heart Foundation to raise money. Darren says "Unfortunately, our business and this charity are strongly linked. We deal with families who have lost loved ones to heart disease on a regular basis. We have seen the devastation it brings and wanted to do something to help raise money for the Irish Heart Foundation which provides enormous support for people." For each headstone sold by Liffey Memorials in 2012, a substantial donation will be made to the Irish Heart Foundation.

The Chamber of Commerce Dinner Returns with a Bang

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce revived their Annual Dinner Dance after a gap of some three years, at the Carlton Shearwater Hotel recently.

Groups from all aspects of the community attended, not only that from the Commercial and business sector in the town but also local clubs, charities, the active retirement groups, political organisations and other non-profit organisations made up the 240 crowd. There was a huge turnout from all the politicians from Ministers, T.Ds, Senators and County/Town Councillors from all political tents, showing solidarity with the business interests of the town.

Past Chamber President and current Chairman of the Vintners, Damien Clarke was MC for the night, with speakers Donal Scannell (Chamber of Commerce President) and Mayor Mike Kelly addressing the issues of business life in the current economic climate in their own quirky and informative manner.

A concurring theme for both speakers was that of “working together” from all organisations and businesses in these tough and uncertain times for the betterment of the town. “Together let’s get Ballinasloe working” the Mayor stated, while Mr. Scannell covered many topics stating “It was great to see so many different organisations from all parts of the community coming together on a night like tonight, from active retirement to the business community. It was a real breath of fresh air having a full house, where moving forward together we can get Ballinasloe back to where it should be. This event should be the start of many that get the whole community socialising and networking together, which is the way forward.”

Mr. Scannell went on to thank the Town Council for their contribution to the Christmas lights and without them this initiative could not have taken place. He also applauded and talked about the warm reaction the Gables Art Group got to their project when they set up a pop up art gallery on Dunlo Street and thanked John Glynn for the use of the property.

Ideas like these should be brought to the table more, which show that the people of Ballinasloe together want to showcase their talents and ideas to get this town working again. He argued that the community should get involved in planning the use of the Convent and grounds opening onto the Suck, “an amenity that is not being exploited enough in our town.”

Mr Seamus Duffy Manager of AIB and Chairperson of BACD also addressed the function - highlighting the many positive effects the local development company has had on the town. He also paid tribute to the excellent work of recently retired BACD manger Helen Kelly and called on newly appointed manger Lyn Donnelly to make a presentation to Helen on behalf of BACD.

Sponsors on the night were thanked effusively by the organisers - namely The Carlton Shearwater Hotel, Fletchers Eletrical, Salmons Department Store, Declan Egans, Claire Healy Pharmacy, Maureen Cahalan, Gerry Stronge and Cathal Concannon.



Fine Gael T.D. Ciarán Cannon and Labour T.D. Colm Keaveney.



Mike O'Brien of Maud Millars and Lisa Barrett of Fair and Murtagh



Labour Senator Lorraine Higgins pictured at the Dinner Dance.



Joe and Collette Hayes

PSA Ireland (Prostate Support and Awareness) in Ballinasloe

Writes Jacqueline Daly

PSA Ireland was initiated in Ballinasloe in September 2009 and works under the umbrella East Galway Cancer Support. The aims of PSA Ireland are: To educate survivors and their spouses of the life altering consequences they can expect post Prostate Surgery, to raise awareness and to provide information and support.

More men are now surviving Prostate cancer and PSA Ireland aims to aid patient's understanding of all aspects of recovery whether medical, mental, emotional or physical.

In November of 2009 Seamus Daly, then a Leaving Cert Student at St. Joseph's College, Garbally, with the support of teacher Grainne Lally, arranged for a waxing and shaving amongst his classmates. The proceeds went to the making of the first ever DVD about the after care of Prostate surgery. This idea has taken off and is now an annual event known as 'Funrazor'. Downey's Bar in Ballinasloe came on board in 2010. Their fundraising to date has been amazing, thanks to Marina, her staff and customers who for the main part have been males in the age bracket of 18 to 25. Downey's were again involved in 2011 and continue to be proactive in highlighting awareness of Prostate Cancer. The goodwill has snowballed and while these events were taking place, a relative of one of the fundraisers (who is Marketing Manager for justeat.ie) was inspired to secure sponsorship for PSA Ireland to establish their own website.

The DVD was launched recently at a function in Gullane's Hotel, Ballinasloe by Galway hurling star Ollie Canning, and is to be provided as part of an information pack to every man who undergoes prostate surgery in UCHG. Eventually it is hoped that it will be rolled out nationwide. PSA Ireland is very grateful to all who contributed to the success of the DVD. The East Galway Prostate Support group and their spouses



Seamus O'Brien (Former Principal Garbally College), Ollie Canning (Former Galway Hurler) and Michael Daly (Committee Member).

deserve great credit for their honesty and openness in telling their stories and making the DVD a reality. Consultant urologist Mr. Eamon Rogers and physiotherapist Beatrice McGinley kindly volunteered their medical expertise to the venture. Dr. Harry Bugler and local actors Mary Cuddy, John Boland, David Hardiman and Seamus Feerick, gave willingly their talents and time. Huge thanks is also due to AV3 productions for making such an excellent production which addresses a wide range of issues relating to the diagnosis, causes, treatment and aftercare of Prostate Surgery.

PSA IRELAND has already captured the attention of our national broadcaster RTE who have recorded a piece for Nationwide (this will be aired in April 2012).

Further information on PSA Ireland and Prostate Cancer can be obtained on the website www.psaireland.com or by calling 087 9040304.



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Garbally's Achievers Marked at Inaugural Alumni Awards

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Some of the past pupils of the renowned academic and sporting nursery that is Garbally College were honoured for their notable achievements in their different fields since they left the gates.

In total fifty-five past pupils were celebrated at the inaugural Alumni Dinner in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel. The line up of honoured guests was jammed packed of individuals who had reached the top of their chosen field whether in the sciences, health, law, literature, Church, media, sport or entertainment. They all had one common interest; they were all once a "Garbally Bhoys."

The awards ceremony was organised by a group of past pupils spear-headed by John Molloy. They chose to honour past pupils who enrolled and attended between 1950 and 1990.

The diocesan school opened for business in 1923 and was ran primarily as a boarding school, thus bringing many of the past pupils from all parts of Ireland and the World. The whole evening had a very relaxed feel and brought friends back together, reminiscing of their experiences and tales they had in the college. The College's first lay principal, Mr. Michael Hyland, gave a very emotional

and warm address to the one hundred and fifty or so guests in attendance and then presented each piece of bespoke bog oak sculpture to each recipient.

One local family from the town had the distinction of no less than three brothers were presented with the commemorative pieces of bog oak that of Ray, Feidlim and Colm McLoughlin. Ray and Feidlim represented Ireland at international level along with the likes of Mick Molloy and Noel Mannion. Some other Ballinasloe lads were also awarded for their prowess on the rugby field.

The likes of the great Cyril Dunne, who played with St. Grellan's and won three-in-a-row with Galway was honoured for his contribution to Gaelic Football .

Patrick Gullane, a world renowned surgeon and a native of Main Street, travelled from Toronto to pick up his award for excelling in his field of medicine. Others honoured on the night were Darren Frehill from Laurencetown of RTE's sports department, Colm Croffy for his work with festivals and events all over Ireland and internationally, Tommy Tiernan with his work as a comedian and Mark Staunton a local golfer in the professional ranks.

Our Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore also attended the night and was honoured for his achievement in politics. He stated

"he was honoured to be among such distinguished past pupils who had excelled in life but he would like to think that these people were just a sample of great people that passed through the gates of Garbally."

Retired Minister for State and former TD for Galway East Noel Tracey, and Senator Michael Mullins were other local public representatives to be singled out.

In one of just three addresses Noel Tracey - was fulsome in his praise on behalf of all those who had passed through the school for the quality and the depth of the teachers and staff who's ethos had been an inspiration to so many.

The College's retiring principal Mr. Seamus O'Brien was congratulated on the huge infrastructural work he had so successfully completed in recent years and his successor, Mr. Stephen O'Reilly was wished every good fortune as he takes up his new post. The Committee and the distinguished Alumni look very much forward to co-operating and assisting the Management in whatever way they can. All the participants were full of praise for John Molloy and his team for succeeding in juggling the diaries of 50 of some of the busiest and successful graduates to gather in the one spot to commemorate and celebrate the success of Garbally College.



Pictured at the Garbally College awards night were: Above (L-R): Cyril Dunne, Conor Hayes and Ciarán Fitzgerald. Below: The three McLoughlin brothers, Ray, Feidhlim and Colm.



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Treat Stress with Acupuncture

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

At one time or other and for a variety of reasons we all experience Stress. This is a normal, healthy response to encourage us to bear up and cope with whatever life throws at us. The fight or flight response is hotwired into our bodies and we need to remember that stress is a physical response as well as an emotional one.

Be it exam stress, the challenge of school or college, financial worries, job security or the ups and downs of relationships! You can now treat these stress levels with the old Chinese method of acupuncture right here in Ballinasloe.

Mary Dolan Watters has been practicing acupuncture for the past seven years. Mary trained in Shannon at The College of Medical Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese medicine and in China in Shuguang Hospital affiliated to Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. She is a member of Acupuncture Council of Ireland and is based in Creagh.

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese healing art. Acupuncturists believe that energy flows through the body system through channels called meridians. This energy is referred to as "Qi" or Chi.

Stress causes an imbalance in the body's energy and causes it to flow improperly. The "Qi" can become blocked and stagnant. It must be unblocked and enabled to flow freely in order to restore harmonious balance in the body. Chinese medicine discovered thousands



of years ago that there is a link between the organs and emotions. So, specific emotions relate to certain organs. For example, joy (or lack of joy) relates to the heart. Anger and frustration relates to the liver. Fear and procrastination relates to the kidneys. Grief or "letting go" is associated with the lungs. Worry relates to the stomach and spleen. Remember that saying: "My stomach is tied up in knots?" Well, there's a perfect illustration."

Acupuncture involves inserting fine needles at very precise pressure points throughout the body. The needles stimulate the body's natural healing processes in its energy system. By stimulating the proper acupressure points, the "Qi" can flow freely, thereby alleviating stress induced mental and physical symptoms. Medical acupuncture is extremely useful in the treatment of many chronic stress related illnesses, not only because of its effectiveness in treatment of the physical body, but also (and perhaps more importantly) because of its ability to penetrate the layers of defence and coping mechanisms, which we humans use. Acupuncture is a simple, relaxing effective way to tackle your stress and related issues. Don't wait for stress to overwhelm you and become a serious health issue. Take steps to control it before it controls you.

Mary practices at her own clinic, at Ballinasloe Acupuncture and Natural Health Clinic, Kilgarve, Creagh, Ballinasloe. Tel: 087 6913648



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Under 11 Quiz Winners: Back (L-R): Quizmaster Tom Lucas, Adrian Ahern BCU, Stephanie Keating and Shane Dolan Creagh NS and Shane McNeill BCU Assistant Manager. Front: Matthew Devine, Maeve Bergin, Fergus Finneran, Oisín Duffy.

Writes Niall Clarke

Ballinasloe Credit Union is a non profit financial co-operative owned and run for the benefit of all its members, joining is one of the best decisions you could make. A credit union is a group of people who save together and lend to each other at a fair and reasonable rate of interest. They offer members the chance to have control over their own finances by making their savings work for them. Every Credit Union is owned by the members, the people who save and borrow from it. People like you.

When you become a member and start saving with your credit union you will have access to fair and reasonable rates on savings and loans. Your savings contribute to your Credit Union's loan fund. So your savings are helping other members. Members Like You

Ballinasloe Credit Union has been operating in Ballinasloe for 46 years with membership now exceeding 17,000 members. Manager Noel Madden outlined the role that credit unions play in the community "The credit union is here to help members get control over their finances, to advise and help them save

and borrow responsibly. Many people are not aware of the benefits of being a member of their local credit union so we are welcoming everyone to call into our offices and speak to a member of staff who will be happy to talk to you about how to become a new member"

BCU is a community owned and run financial services co-operative that helps people in their daily lives, whether it is regular savings or a small personal loan. As many people in the country feel the pressure of increased bills and living expenses, it is important that they have alternatives to the high cost of services of moneylenders which often trap households into a cycle of debt. We want our members to know that we will put them first at all times and will continue to provide these local accessible services well into the future.

It has been shown throughout history that by working together people can achieve far more through co-operation than by individual effort. The success of the Credit Union movements worldwide is a clear illustration of this. Credit Unions have served their members well in Ireland since 1958 and as long as there are active members, they will continue to do so. Credit Unions exist to serve the needs of their members.



Age 11 - 13 Quiz Winners: Back (L-R): Quizmaster Tom Lucas, Adrian Ahern BCU, Stephanie Keating and Shane Dolan Creagh NS and Shane McNeill BCU Assistant Manager. Front: Joseph Devine, Colm Reilly, Matthew Whelan, Aaron McGreal.



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Minister Opens New Crèche

Writes Barra Ó Crófaigh

The Minister for Children Frances Fitzgerald has described the new community crèche in Poolboy as an “important asset” for the whole community. The crèche, which caters for up to 50 children, was built at a cost of almost 1 million euro through state and local community funding.

A sizable crowd full of youthful and happy faces turned up to witness the opening of the crèche, Fr. John Garvey and Rev. George Flynn blessed the building while all political dignitaries for Galway East looked on and welcomed the opening of this new facility.

There was a recurring theme as the speakers addressed the crowd and that was to highlight the great effort and work of Sister Bridie McInerney in her effort to get the crèche where it is today. Cathal Cregg of Haldon Developments said “You can’t stop positive people and that’s why this is where the crèche is today.”

Liam Curley Chairman of the board of directors joked “I hope people realise how difficult it actually was to get where we are today but now we have a wonderful facility to be proud of which will benefit the whole community.” The Minister stated “We must understand the need for these facilities, high quality experiences and care at the age of 3 years old for 3 hours a day will give these children a better start to life and



its proven further down the line they will be less involved in alcohol and drugs, they will be better in the workplace, this is what every parent wants for their child, the best possible start to life and with this facility your child will have that with its high quality care. It’s a great community resource and it’s been shown all over the country 95% of families are availing of these facilities. We hope to develop the special needs side of things in the not so distant future.”

The crèche employs nine people with Valerie Coughlan as manger; Valerie stated “This crèche did not just appear over night, it’s taken years of hard work and preparation to get where we are today. We started in much more humble surroundings in the Emerald Ballroom in 2004, the crèche was known as Busy Little Bees. It was a lot more cramped, dark and not exactly modern, what we have today is leaps and bounds ahead.

On obtaining the capital grant of almost 1 million euro we moved to our new state of the art facilities and we feel much more comfortable here.”

Meg and Wayne Comer, a couple who moved from Leitrim to Ballinasloe said “It’s a state of the art facility in the heart of Ballinasloe, we’ve seen nothing to this standard in Leitrim. Imogen (3) really loves it, she actually can’t wait to get up in the morning, she is happy when she comes in the morning and she’s happy when she leaves, they are obviously doing something right here.” Patrick and Kathleen Kelly from St. Brendan’s, Grandparents to twins Lauren and Layla Kelly (3) said “It’s absolutely magnificent, so central, the children are so happy you’d know by them that there enjoying themselves.”

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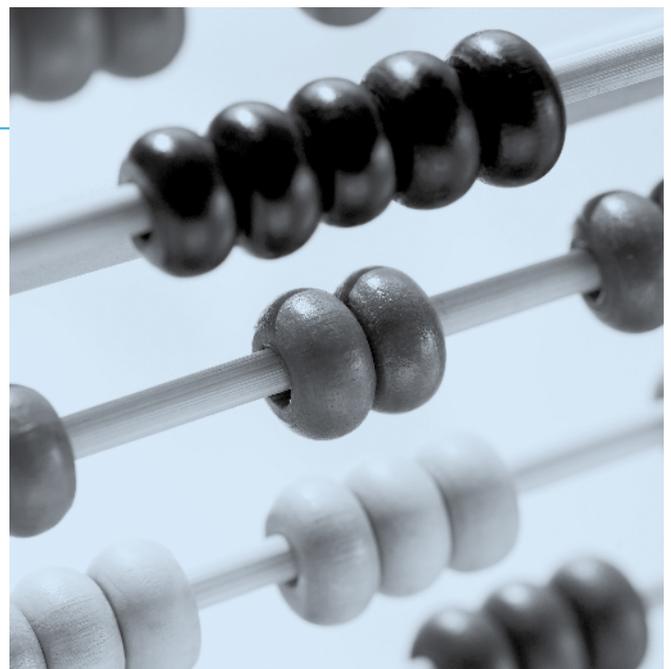
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Ballinasloe Care and Repair

Barra Ó Crofaigh

Sometimes it's the little things that make life difficult. If you are elderly or infirm, changing a light bulb, installing a smoke alarm or moving furniture can be a daunting task, especially if you have no family members to help. To help address this problem, Ballinasloe Care and Repair was founded, early in 2010.

This idea was developed by Age Action Ireland and when the franchise was offered to Ballinasloe Social Services, a group of volunteers came together to run the scheme. With the help of Ballinasloe Training for Employment, an office was equipped and staffed in the Social Services Centre in Brackernagh. Funding from various sources including the Mercy Sisters Western Province, the Lions Club and Ballinasloe Carol singers helped immensely. Now, almost two years later the group is well established and looking forward to developing its services into the future.

There are currently seventeen volunteers with a variety of skills that have been trained, fully Garda vetted and carry identification badges. A wide range of tasks have been carried out to date. These include minor gardening, installing hand rails, changing plugs, fuses, light bulbs, hanging curtains, moving furniture, minor decorating, painting, installing security locks and chains, installing smoke alarms, plumbing and electrical work. Normally a task should not take longer than an hour and the

Care and Repair Volunteers (L-R): Mary Cunningham, Margaret Brennan, Eamon Lally, Nuala Cormican and Martin Lyons.



client provides any material needed. There is no charge for this service but a donation may be made to Care and Repair if desired. A Befriending Service is hoped to be set up in the not so distant future. This is where a group of volunteers will be available to call to elderly people who would like a friendly visit and a chat. It is hoped that this service will develop further over the coming year and new volunteers will be especially welcome to join and help out. Training will be provided and Garda vetting will be necessary.

Care and Repair have a committee to organise and direct the work of the group, Joe Staunton is Chairperson, Margaret Brennan is Secretary, Eamon Lally is Treasurer and the committee

members Mary Cunningham and Martin Lyons. They would be appreciative for any support you can give. They believe that this service is a vital one, that it can make life easier for our elderly and help them stay in their own homes. They would like to encourage people to make elderly neighbours or friends aware of the services they provide. This service is confidential and free of charge.

So, if you, or someone you know, needs a hand with that small little task that could make life easier, or would like a visit from a trained volunteer, contact the Care and Repair office in the Social Services Centre, Brackernagh.

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Val the Statesman at 90!

Writes Ken Kelly

Val Martin of Ard Mhuire, Ballinasloe can truly be called an Irish Statesman. The remarkable former Bord na Mona engineer certainly belies his age, having been born on the day the Irish Free State was set up in 1922.

Having travelled all over the world, 90-year-old Val certainly enjoyed the various parties and celebrations held in his honour when he recently reached the milestone birthday. "We had a few late nights with family and friends, played two rounds of golf in four days and met many old acquaintances" chuckled the colourful and entertaining personality.

He was born in Portumna, played minor hurling with Galway in 1940 and sat his Leaving Cert in Garbally College, the same year. A life-long supporter of the GAA, he was immensely proud of his native parish over the last decade when the Canning-driven side won so many county, provincial and All-Ireland hurling club titles.

Joining the Ballinasloe Golf Club in 1959, Val went on to become captain in 1972, president in both 1984 and 2000 before being elected a trustee and honorary life member of the club. And still he refuses to use any "gadget" on the course for carrying his clubs except his reliable hand-pulled trolley, despite any kind of weather. He is the envy of his colleagues as twice a week he trundles along, towing his trusty hand-trolley behind, displaying



exceptional stamina. As lifetime president of the Millenium Golf Society, Val enjoys playing the monthly competitions on some of the country's top courses, including Mount Juliet, Adare Manor, Glasson, Tullamore, Portumna etc.-again adamant that he walks the entire course.

A compelling, engaging personality, he loves to share his experiences with his friends at the "19th Hole". He recalls his work in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the United States as well as the endless family holidays that meant so much to him. And his remarkable memory, coupled with his unique descriptive rendition of days and dates, is sometimes mind-boggling. Those who encounter him for the first time, find it hard to comprehend

that Val still drives, works, plays golf twice a week as well his card games and other social activities. He is loved and respected by all ages and has been described "as a great ambassador for his Golf Club, his town and his country."

So what does the future hold for Val the Man at 90. "Well I have a few things to do yet and a few places to visit, if the Good Lord spares me. But I'm not giving up the golf and I don't want any presents of them battery or electrically operated gadgets for carrying my clubs. They might only let me down" said the jolly and good-humoured Val. Surely "one of Nature's Gentlemen" setting examples for all with his modest and sporting personality.



Four generations of relations turned up to help Val celebrate his 90th Birthday Bash.

Writes Michael McCullough

I was born in the top room on the east side of our house at 5 Society Street, Ballinasloe on December 28th, 1939 and the first church I was in was St. Michael's, on my Christening after the New Year.

I can remember the next church I saw was of course the Presbyterian Church directly across the Street from our house and immediately adjoining my mother's Society Fruit Stores (1933) on the western boundary. The next church I recall was St. John's on the hill, overlooking the fair green. Again St. John's immediately adjoins the plot of my mother's shop on the South side.

I was introduced to the piano at the age of 5 by my mother and was brought to Miss Lavina Sheridan's House on Dunlo Hill for my first lesson and there were not one but two pianos, one a Pianola in our house.

At the age of six or seven I recall going up a stone stairs at the rear of my mother's Coffee Room on Sunday afternoons and listening to Mrs. Sophie Cobban from Shanboley, playing the Harmonium and the congregation singing at 3 o'clock in the Presbyterian Church (built in the Famine year of 1845). Congregational singing moved me then, as it does now.

Miss Lavina Sheridan LISM was my music teacher and always resided at Dunlo Hill in a house rented from Patrick Clarke.

At 11 years of age (1950) Breezy (Miss Sheridan) asked me to help in the organ loft by pumping the organ as it was non-electric. Miss Sheridan acquired the famous name of Breezy as she would shout to the pumpers "more wind, more wind." There was a piece of lead attached to a string coming out of the Organ box at the rear and a mark indicated where the lead marker must be at all times in order that the bellows could provide ample wind for the pipes!

In response to an advertisement by the church authorities for an organist Miss Sheridan replied and got the job in 1924. She then started music lesson in pianoforte and violin. Breezy was a true artist, a professional and competent musician. The previous organist was a Herr Coss who was German and may have come to Ireland after the 1st World War, as did many other musicians at that time. He moved to Loughrea in 1924 and was succeeded by Herr Wolfe who taught pianoforte to me and my brother as well as Marion and Kitty Pender of Cloaghagalla, Aughrim.

Herr Wolfe cycled from Loughrea each Friday hail rain and snow to teach us at Cloaghagalla. At this time Breezy

St. Michael's Choir - Pumper to Organist - an Insider's View!



was recovering from a serious operation and was unable to give lessons and my mother was anxious that we keep up our musical studies.

On my entry to the choir in 1950 as a pumper, I recall the main singers at that time. The format for singing in the choir was chest level book stands on which the Gregorian chant book was placed and the men chanted with organ accompaniment. In addition there was the Holy Ghost Hymnal. Also on the news of a death and if the choir was requested Breezy would call to St Grellan's school and give me a list of the singers I had to call to inform them of the High Mass. At that time only the people who paid for the Mass got a choir and I got off school to pump the organ and other boys got off to serve mass.

The teachers in St Grellan's taught the higher classes Hymns for singing at 10 o'clock mass on Sundays in St Michael's and Breezy played the organ. And at that time the priest did intone the first line and the choir responded and completed the hymn. Indeed Breezy was so precise

that for the Amen she had the notation for each priest written down so that the response was replied to in the same pitch!

I was introduced to organ playing in the summer of 1954 after my first year as a boarder in Garbally College. During my first year I studied pianoforte from Breezy for the Royal Academy of Music Exams and she also prepared the selected students, following auditions, for the annual Christmas Opera. I had a part as a "young girl" in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Yeoman of the Guard".

In addition she also produced shows in the Town Hall using the choir and others as cast members. I recall that an Uncle of Fr. Kevin Cummins, a Mr. Kelly, played the Violin in the choir sometimes. The Sunday choir sang the traditional Hymns mainly to Our Lady. The circulation of hymns sheets is a relatively new practice and the main hymn book was the Veritas Hymnal, the Holy Ghost (Black) Hymnal and the Redemptorist Blue Hymn book. Easter was, prior to Vatican II, a restricted and sad occasion and the hymns were



really of a minor chord form. Of course Latin was the language for the Sacred Hymns other than the oldie oldies. Other services where the organ featured were the Sunday evening Benediction and the Men's and Ladies' confraternity.

I would say that I was privileged to have been taught pianoforte and organ by Breezy. Like any other child of the time we didn't appreciate in full the knowledge and wisdom imparted to us by our elders in any sphere. Breezy was an expert on Theory which is the essence of understanding music and she really made her pupils learn this important discipline. In playing performance she led by example despite her small stature, she was totally competent in playing octaves with ease and was a distinguished violinist as well. Kay Flynn (Purcell) Maureen Flynn (Donoghue) and Marie Goode (Dolan) and I all studied theory together.

In 1968 "Breezy" received, at a very august ceremony in Garbally College a Papal Honour from His Holiness Pope Paul VI for her outstanding and unselfish contribution to Liturgical Music in St Michael's Church and her teaching of music in St Joseph's College during her life in Ballinasloe.

I distinctly recall my first session at the organ in the choir. In particular some of the ivories were missing and there were a few depressions on the keys blocks. I could not reach the pedals at that time. Note by note I was "instructed" as to how it was played and how long it was held. I was given a simple piece to play with my right hand only. I had to take it home and learn it off by heart. The principles

of playing the organ were instilled in me by Breezy and I owe her for that. There is a distinct difference both in playing and sounding the organ as against the piano.

One must realise that in the 50's and 60's the national school was as regards education an extension of the "Church". Priests called regularly and the for choir practice was examined and the teachers would all march down to the church with the students for special practices for Holy Communion and Confirmation.

The school chorus occupied the centre aisle both right and left pews. The teachers took the outside seats relative to their classes with the youngest to the front and the seniors to the rear. Breezy would play an introduction and we would sing the hymns from memory having been drilled in the school Assembly Hall.

I have no knowledge as to when the first organ was installed but I believe it to have been a tracker action organ. A new organ was built by Crompton organ builders of Dublin in 1958 to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the consecration of the church. A Dr. Lucy, Bishop of Cork gave the sermon and the church was overflowing.

I was unable to source information as to when the previous organ was installed which is a great pity. The exposed pipes were located at the back of the organ loft and there was a wooden screen closing them off. The consul was located next to this screen. However in 1991 the pipes were encased as they are today and the consul was moved to the front of the gallery. The pipes are encased in a Brazilian mahogany enclosure and on

the consul there was an under manual dwarf drawer which allowed the stops to be preset.

In the refurbishment this was removed and a microprocessor was installed along with totally new wiring. The present Organ is referred to as an Electro-pneumatic and new pipes were added. Derek Verso is an organ builder, tuner and organist. He tuned the organ on the 31st July 2008 and non working stops and vibrations were corrected. The current tiered layout for the Choir Loft was created in 1991.

Finally, I wish to remember all the kind souls, now gone to their eternal reward that sang in this organ gallery since the church was built and to the organists. St. Michael's choir prides itself in providing harmonised and melodic hymns for the Liturgy both in Latin, Irish and English and over the years have received many compliments both verbally and in writing.

Our motto should be "Not alone to sing but to perform."

A list of the previous organists are as follows

- 1918-24:** Herr Coss
- 1924-70:** Ms. L. Sheridan. *LISM*
- 1971-73:** Mr. Gerry Murphy. *B. Mus.* (was music teacher in Garbally)
- 1973-79:** Mrs. Mary Connolly.
- 1979-2008:** Mrs Kay Purcell. *ALCM*
- 2008-Present:** Michael McCullagh

St. Michael's Choir are always seeking new members, rehearsals every Tuesday night at 7.30pm in St. Michael's Church.

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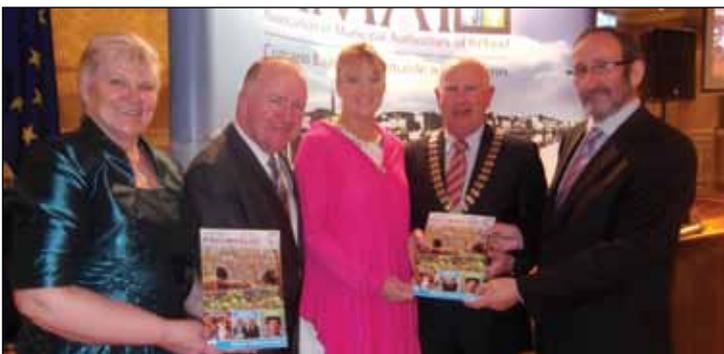
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APRIL Events Guide

1 April		
Downey's Bar	Karaoke	10pm
Maud Millars	The Skillet Pot	10pm
Carlton Shearwater	Jimmy Buckley	10pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
2 April		
Gullanes Hotel	Ballinasloe Musical Socitey AGM	8.30pm
Blakes Bar	DJ Coqco for the Monday Club	9pm
Gullanes Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
3 April		
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
4 April		
An Tain	Trad Session	8pm
Gullanes Hotel	AIB Business Briefing	8pm
5 April		
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan & Friends	9.30pm
6 April		
Town Hall Theatre	Country Market	9am-2pm
Blakes Bar	LATE BAR	11pm-2am
7 April		
Downey's Bar	Easter Party Nite with Local DJ'S	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Live Music	10pm
Maud Millars	Coverstory	10pm
Canal Bar	Claymore	10pm
Carlton Shearwater	The Galway Rose	8pm
Gibbons Pillar House	DJ Dolf	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Gentleman John	9.30pm
8 April		
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
Downey's Bar	The Colin Gallen Experience	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Tamlin	10pm
Maud Millars	The Rivulettes	10pm
Carlton Shearwater	Gina Dale Hayes and the Champions	10pm
Canal Bar	David McGuire	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Christy and Mike	9.30pm
9 April		
Gullanes Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Maud Millars	Live Music	10pm
Blakes Bar	DJ Coqco for the Monday Club	9pm
10 April		
East Galway Cancer Support	Family Support in The Family Centre	7.30pm
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
11 April		
An Tain	Trad Session	8pm
Gullanes Hotel	Flower & Garden Club	8pm
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan & Friends	9.30pm
12 April		
Dunlo Tavern	Singers Circle	
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	10pm
Gullanes Hotel	East Galway Cancer Support Launch	8pm
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan & Friends	9.30
Gullanes Hotel	Bruno Groening - Circle of Friends	7pm
13 April		
Dunlo Tavern	Sons of Erin	10pm
Maud Millars	Gaegan Pagans	10pm
Canal Bar	Micheal Regan	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Country Market	9am-2pm
Blakes Bar	LATE BAR	11pm-2am
14 April		
East Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
Downey's Bar	Party Night with local DJ's	10pm
Maud Millars	Keith and Johnny	10pm
Gibbons Pillar House	Div and Killer	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Dave McGuire	9.30pm

15 April		
Downey's Bar	The Mac Live	10pm
Maud Millars	The Hooch Hikers	10pm
Carlton Shearwater	Jason Mc Gilligan	10pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
16 April		
Gullanes Hotel	Soroptimist Club AGM	8pm
Blakes Bar	DJ Coqco for the MONDAY Club	9pm
Gullanes Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
17 April		
Family Centre	Breast Support Group East Galway Cancer Support	7pm
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
18 April		
An Tain	Trad Session	8pm
Enterprise Centre	BACD AGM	8pm
19 April		
Gullanes Hotel	Bruno Groening - Circle of Friends	7pm
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	10pm
Gullanes Hotel	Fair and Festival Opening Night	8pm
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan & Friends	9.30pm
20 April		
Maud Millars	Idle Tone	10pm
Canal Bar	Liam Doyle	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Country Market	9am-2pm
Blakes Bar	Late Bar	11pm-2am
21 April		
Maud Millars	The Rivulettes	10pm
Canal Bar	Bojangle	10pm
Gibbons Pillar House	The Klientes	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Night Owls	9.30pm
Gullanes Hotel	Texas Hold'em (Ballinasloe GAA)	8pm
22 April		
Maud Millars	The Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
Carlton Shearwater	Robert Mizzell	10pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
23 April		
Blakes Bar	DJ Coqco for the MONDAY Club	9pm
Gullanes Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
24 April		
The Family Centre	Prostate Support Group	8pm
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
25 April		
An Tain	Trad Session	8pm
26 April		
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan & Friends	9.30pm
27 April		
Dunlo Tavern	One 2 One	10pm
Maud Millars	Live Music	10pm
Canal Bar	Tir Na nÓg	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Country Market	9am-2pm
Blakes Bar	Late Bar	11pm-2am
28 April		
Dunlo Tavern	Live Music	10pm
Maud Millars	Alan Lawler	10pm
Gullanes Hotel	Texas Holdem for Ballinasloe GAA	8.30pm
Gibbons Pillar House	Div & Killer	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
29 April		
Maud Millars	The Skillet Pot	10pm
Carlton Shearwater	Mike Denver	10pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
30 April		
Blakes Bar	DJ Coqco for the MONDAY Club	9pm
Gullanes Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm



At the AMAI Spring Conference in Cavan were (L-R): Cllr. Teresa Byrne Fogarty (Leixlip and originally from Ballinasloe), Cllr. Johnny Walsh (member of the executive AMAI), Diana Walsh, Cllr. Ted Howlin (President AMAI) and Tom Ryan (Director AMAI).



Pictured at the Captains' Drive were (L-R): Sean Tully (Senior Captain), John Hurley (Captain), Helen Carrig (Ladie's Captain), Michael S. Kelly (President).

MAY Events Guide

1 May		
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Portiuncula Chapel	Healing mass for cancer sufferers	7.30pm
2 May		
An Tain	Trad Session	8pm
3 May		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9.30
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	9.30
4 May		
Canal Bar	Pascal Brennan	10pm
Maud Millars	Live Music	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Trad Session	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Country Market	9am - 2pm
Blakes Bar	Late Bar	11pm - 2am
5 May		
Dunlo Tavern	The Klients	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Country Comfort	9.30pm
East Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
Maud Millars	Keith and Johnny	10pm
Canal Bar	Michael Regan	10pm
6 May		
Dunlo Tavern	Done and Dusted	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Night Owls	9.30pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
Maud Millars	the rivulettes	10pm
7 May		
Maud Millars	Live Music	10pm
8 May		
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Family Centre	East Galway Cancer Family Support	7.30pm
9 May		
An Tain	Trad session	8pm
Gullanes Hotel	Ballinasloe Flower and Garden Club	8pm
10 May		
Dunlo Tavern	Singers Circle	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9.30
Gullanes Hotel	Bruno Groening - Circle of Friends	7pm
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	10pm
Carlton Shearwater	The Mayor Awards	8.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9.30
11 May		
Canal Bar	Frankie McDonald	10pm
Carlton Shearwater	Summer Dance School	
Town Hall Theatre	Country Market	9 am - 2pm
Blakes Bar	LATE BAR	11pm - 2am
Dunlo Tavern	Live Music	10pm
Maud Millars	coverstory	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Centre Stage Youth Theatre	8pm
12 May		
Carlton Shearwater	Summer Dance School	
Haydens Hotel	Shana Golden	9.30
East Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
Maud Millars	The Rivulettes	10pm
Canal Bar	Back Stage	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Centre Stage Youth Theatre	8pm
13 May		
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
Dunlo Tavern	'Deal or No Deal'	10pm
Maud Millars	The Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
14 May		
Gullanes Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
15 May		
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Family Centre	East Galway Breast Cancer Support	7pm

16 May		
An Tain	Trad Session	8pm
17 May		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9.30
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	10pm
18 May		
Canal Bar	Liam Doyle	10pm
Maud Millars	The Gaegan Pagans	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Celi Weekend	
Town Hall Theatre	Country Market	9 am - 2pm
Blakes Bar	Late Bar	11pm - 2am
Dunlo Tavern	Kensey 3	10pm
19 May		
Haydens Hotel	Céili Weekend	
Haydens Hotel	Last Man Standing	9.30pm
East Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
Maud Millars	Chill out	10pm
Canal Bar	Ken and Shane	10pm
20 May		
Haydens Hotel	Celi Weekend	9.30pm
Town Hall Theatre	Bealtaine Festival - Bara Singers	3 - 5.30pm
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
Downeys Bar	Dollar Daly	10pm
Maud Millars	the skillet pot	10pm
21 May		
Gullanes Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
22 May		
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
The Family Centre	Prostate Support Group	8pm
23 May		
An Tain	Trad session	8pm
24 May		
River Suck/Town	Summerfest	Daytime
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9.30
Maud Millars	Acoustic Session	10pm
25 May		
Canal Bar	Bojangle	10pm
River Suck/Town	Summerfest	Daytime
Town Hall Theatre	Country Market	9am - 2pm
Blakes Bar	LATE BAR	11pm - 2am
Dunlo Tavern	Live Music	10pm
Maud Millars	idle tone	10pm
26 May		
River Suck/Town	Summerfest	Daytime
Dunlo Tavern	Silkcut Blue	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Night Owls	9.30pm
East Nightclub	DJ till late	11.30pm
Maud Millars	Streetwise	10pm
Canal Bar	David Mc Guire	10pm
27 May		
River Suck/Town	Summerfest	Daytime
Planet Nightclub	DJ Till Late	11.30pm
Downeys Bar	Paschal Brennan Live	10pm
Maud Millars	The Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
28 May		
Gullanes Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
29 May		
Gullanes Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Family Center	East Galway Cancer Support AGM	7.30pm
30 May		
An Tain	Trad session	8pm
31 May		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9.30pm
Gullanes Hotel	Bruno Groening - Circle of Friends	7pm



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Fair and Festival Open Night

The Fair and Festival committee are inviting everyone to an open night in Gullane's Hotel on Thursday 19th April at 8pm. It is an information night, a chance to hear about the planning and decision-making behind the Fair and a chance to maybe get involved. Speaking to Ballinasloe Life, Timmy Broderick, Chairman, said "I am delighted to invite the people of the town and the surrounding areas, to Gullane's for our open night 2012. It is a great opportunity for locals to discover what exactly goes into planning such a large event. We will have speakers on the various aspects of the fair, including the

lunging, the Queen of the Fair, and the foal competitions. The evening is also a great opportunity for people to volunteer their expertise, see what areas they could help out in, and how they could get more involved in their community. We will also be there to take questions and suggestions from attendees.

"It is as important, from a committee point of view, to listen to the public's thoughts on the fair. To ensure the continued success of the fair we all have to work together" Timmy concluded. Our catchphrase for the night is "Be there and be fair!" October Fair Open Night on Thursday 19th April at 8pm in Gullane's Hotel.



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Out and About in Ballinasloe



Pictured at the recent Garbally College awards were the Gullane Family (L-R): Tomás, Caroline, Dr. Patrick, Barbara and Eamonn.



Jackie Dolan and Sean Ward of J&S Photos at the Chamber of Commerce Dinner Dance



Pictured at the recent Garbally College awards night were (L-R): Damien Curley, Fergus Curran, Lucy and Ollie Kilkenny and Matt Waters.



Volunteers and Supporters with County Mayor Michael 'Mogie' Maher and Ollie Canning at the launch of the PSA Ireland DVD.



Mr. Adrian Ahern and his wife Mary Frances with friends and work colleagues at his retirement night from the HSE in Gullane's Hotel.



St. Patrick's weekend heritage display winners Mal and Ciara Croffy.



Pádraig Ó Ceithearnaigh receiving his award from former principal Michael Hyland, at the recent Garbally College awards night.



Senator Michael Mullins, market vendors and shoppers at the Ballinasloe Country Market launch.

Sean Nós - Six Months in and the Feet Are Still Shuffling



Back Row (L-R): Marian Ruane, Joan Madden, Martina Flanagan, Helena Coughlan. Front Row (L-R): Marie Dunne, Geraldine Delaney, Bridie Ruane, Claire Gibbons.



Our junior class stepping it out

Writes Martina Flanagan

Sean Nós when translated means *Old Style* and is a living tradition practiced all over the world and Ballinasloe is now on the map of Sean Nós Dancing.

When we look back at recordings when dancing was done at the crossroads in villages and towns all over Ireland we see a style of dance where the feet batter and move in loose shuffles. This is Sean Nós. It is a simple percussive style, effortless and graceful. It is an informal and spontaneous form of dance where the dancer and the music compliment one another. The dancers arms are relaxed and loose and a small space is all that is required. At wakes and gatherings the half door was taken down and placed on the stone floor so that the sound of the beat of the dancers feet could be heard. In essence the dancer taps notes of music on the floor. Six months ago sisters Martina Flanagan and Bridie Ruane started *Club Damhsa an Sean Nós* in Ballinasloe. A dance club that is open to children and adults of all ages where they can learn the traditional style of Sean Nós dance. Now when you enter the doors of the GAA Clubhouse in Brackernagh, Ballinasloe on

a Tuesday night the echoes of shuffling and tapping feet and the sounds of reels and hornpipes would automatically make you climb the stairs to source this harmony of sound. What you will find is a group of children and adults learning Sean Nós dance steps.

The club is growing steadily and St. Patrick's weekend was a very busy time for the club. The children's class, made up of children from the local schools, entered the parade and scooped first prize in the *Cultural Section*. Later that night the adults completed their first *Charity Pub Shuffle* dancing in ten pubs and collecting €786 for Ballinasloe Social Services along the way.

They used to say "A good dancer could dance on a silver tray and an excellent dancer could dance on a sixpence". Well there are no silver trays or sixpences in the GAA clubhouse on a Tuesday night but there are plenty of good dancers and plenty of room for more.

If you are interested in learning Sean Nós dance, having fun and getting some exercise, then contact Martina on 087 1446483.

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St. Patrick's Day Celebrations Brings Big Crowd Out

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

This year's celebrations fell on a Bank Holiday weekend and organisers jumped at the chance to have a party atmosphere throughout the weekend. St. Patrick's Day this year was celebrated with a street heritage display in the town centre with a dozen premises putting old memorabilia and vintage exhibitions outside on the streets with live entertainment in the Square all day, despite the inclement weather, it was a promising start.

The parade took place on the Sunday and proved to be most successful without the distractions of matches. It attracted some floats from outside areas like Dunmore, Mountbellew and Ahascragh-Fohenagh as well as the town itself with floats ranging from a massive replica of the Titanic from Dunmore Vintage Club, to more topical issues like septic tanks and turf cutting.

Schools in the area provided a very colourful and musical theme to the parade with Newtown NS, Eglishe NS and Scoil an Croí Naofa taking part. Even Her Royal Highness the Queen made a very special appearance while Dr. Ada English visited the parade in a "Jonny Malone" vintage car to promote the up and coming Ada English Summer School

The reviewing platforms were entertained by a group of very young Sean Nos dancers and Mayor Mike Kelly could not resist joining them to learn a few steps.

There were five categories in this year's parade and the winners were: **Cultural:** 1. Sean Nós Dancers 2. Ceoltoirí 3. Colahan's Céili. **Voluntary:** 1. Civil Defence 2. Dunmore Vintage Club 3. Ahascragh Farmers Special Merit award going to Active Retirement. **Sporting:** 1. Camogie Club 2. Ballinasloe GAA 3. Ballinasloe AFC. **Education:** 1. Scoil an Croí Naofa 2. Newtown NS 3. Eglishe NS and **Commercial/Business:** 1. Clarkes 2. Gullane's Hotel 3. Mountbellew Agricultural Show. Businesses in the town were encouraged to decorate their premises with "A Best Dressed Window Competition." David Mann took the spoils, Best decorated window was won by Jorenas, Best painted window was won by An Tain, Overall winners of the parade were the Civil Defence who put on some excellent displays, Scoil an Croí Naofa won best school with Croffy Quality Meats winning Best Heritage Display and Sherdians winning Best Heritage Window. The parade was sponsored by Ballinasloe Town Council, Ballinasloe Vintners, the Chamber of Commerce, the Credit Union, Supermacs, the AIB and Gullanes Hotel.

The reviewing platform comprised of Rev. John Garvey, Mr. Donal Scannell (President Chamber of Commerce), Mr. Mark O'Donnell (Ballinasloe Town Clerk), Mr. Micheal Kitt TD, Mr. Colm Keaveney TD, Senator Micheal Mullins, Senator Lorraine Higgins, Mayor Michael Kelly, Councillors Pat O'Sullivan, Lucy Loyd Keighery, Johny Walsh, Carmel Grealy, Mattie Ganly, Superintendent Cliona Richardson, Mrs. Maureen Waters (Conradh na Gaeilge) and Queen of the Fair Catriona Farrell. Parade Marshall was Mr. Cyril Dunne and M.C for the afternoon was Mrs. Kathleen Croffy.

Mayor Michael Kelly addressed the large crowd in attendance paying a special tribute to the hard work of the parade committee Chairman Johnny Walsh, Secretary Carmel Grealy and Treasurer Mrs. Nancy Cregg. Mr. Donal Scannell President of the Chamber of Commerce in his own address commented on the wonderful community effort the parade created and called on people to support each other and our town in these difficult times.

Footballing Great Cyril Dunne leading the Parade as the Grand Marshal.



Cllr. Dermot Connolly takes ducks to water.



Dunmore Vintage Club take Titanic Down the Street in Ballinasloe.



Ballinasloe Camogie Club.

Local Rap Artiste: Ill Psychz

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

"Ill Psychz" a 23 year old artiste growing in stature in the Irish rap industry, hails from Moore, and is a past student of Garbally College. Darren Scott (as he goes by during the day) was brought up in Bristol but moved back to Ireland when he was twelve. He started writing lyrics at around fourteen. Currently a full-time Counselling and Personal Development student at GMIT - the art of rapping is proving a very busy sideline for Darren.

Psychz (a take on the *Oliver* film and the character Bill Sykes) released his first mix tape the self titled "ill Psychz" back in April of last year and since then has had a string of really good hits with some YouTube clips getting more than 4,000 views. He sees his genre and type of a music as a sort of organic form of Irish Hip hop, he stresses that he hates coming across as pretentious but maybe his style of music could best be termed "alternative hip hop".

On listening to his music, one doesn't have to be a rap lover to appreciate this artiste's talent. His genius lyrics mixed with an easy to listen to flow; comes across as powerful music, to be easily appreciated by all music lovers. Parental guidance is advised on some of his tracks which some can be a bit dark but nonetheless at the core - a very talented artiste is obvious.

His influences are not solely "rap" related and admits that growing up as a child, his parents and Irish upbringing influenced his music even to this day. Ill states "Van Morrison, Paul Brady, Dolores Keane and Mary Black all influenced me in their own way, I can't deny my musical roots, sure I'm a rapper but I'm not from "the ghetto. I appreciate all genres of music but on the rap side of things 2Pac, Eminem and Jay-Z were also huge influences on me."

Growing up in Ballinasloe also has had its indelible watermark "this town has an extremely witty culture and population which usually come across in my music, as critics have commented that my style is very tongue in cheek." Psychz jokes "in a



town like this you need to know how to stick up for yourself in a good bantered slugging match or else your branded the worst of the worst, "A fool!" Townies always have this instilled in them from a young age to be quick off the mark and quick to think on their feet and this definitely comes across in my lyric writing."

Ill Psychz is thought of in high esteem in the ever growing hip-hop industry of Ireland and has worked with fellow rappers like Ayzee, producers like Ray Diamond and Music Directors like Ovi (linked with Tray Songz) in the pipeline Math Man, a up and coming Dublin based rapper and Deseeva a New Zealand based producer await the musical marvels of Ill Psychz. "The past year has certainly seen no drop in the level of exciting music being produced by emerging Irish acts like rapper Ill Psychz. To quote the Music critique Jackie Hayden of Hotpress. He is hoping to launch his first CD of work this year and will designate all proceeds for charity."

For more information you can find Ill Psychz on the following sites. Facebook: facebook.com/illpsychzmusic, Youtube: youtube.com/illpsychzofficial or on Soundcloud: www.soundcloud.com/ill-psychz.

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Minister Presents Awards to Madonna House Graduates

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

The Minister for Training and Skills, Ciarán Cannon TD, presented FETAC certificates to over 100 graduates of Madonna House Education Centre. The Minister presented FETAC Level 3, Level 5 and Level 6 Awards in Community Care, Youth-work, Supervision in Childcare and Healthcare Skills, to graduates at a ceremony in Gullane's Hotel.

He also presented Leaving Certificate Applied full certificates to the full time learners in the Centre. Minister Cannon was one of the special guests on the night which was also attended by Mr. Joe McDonagh CEO of the County Galway VEC, Ms Eithne Nic Donnachadha Adult Education Officer and Senator Michael Mullins who was a member of the Board of Management of Madonna House Education Centre for many years.

Presenting the awards, Minister Cannon stated "While receiving your certificate today is an important achievement in your lives, it is vital that you don't stop here. Learning is for life and you should continue to build your skills in order to prepare yourselves for the future."

The Director of the Centre, Rita Coen thanked the invited guests for attending the special event, and in light of the Centre's closure in the summer of 2012 she thanked the County Galway VEC



Above: Minister Ciaran Cannon, Sen. Michael Mullins and CEO of Co. Galway VEC Joe McDonagh and AEO of Co. Galway VEC Eithne Nic Donnachda with the FETAC Level 6 Supervision and Childcare Graduates. Below: Ciaran Cannon presents an award to Sr. Helena for her dedicated service to Madonna House.



for their support to the centre over the years and her excellent staff who were dedicated to the education of disadvantaged learners. Many of whom have been teaching in the centre since its establishment in 1984. Sr. Helena Crehan was presented with an award on the night in recognition of her vision to establish a centre in Ballinasloe and her commitment to it as she has been a member of the Board of management since its inception.

Mr. Joe McDonagh CEO congratulated the learners on their return to education and their wonderful achievements he stated "I sincerely thank the team of the Centre for their continued support in assisting the learners to fulfill their potential."

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Money Savings Tips on LIFE ASSURANCE

No one likes to contemplate dying, but if you are married, have children or have any large loans, life assurance is something that really should concern you. Life assurance is most often less expensive than people think and even more so if you shop around or better still get a broker to do the shopping around for you – for example two 30-year-old non-smokers could have €150,000 life cover for 20 years for less than €4 per week.

Mortgage Protection Life Assurance

This is the most common life policy and it is designed to pay off your mortgage if you die. It is very important to know that you do not have to take out this policy with your mortgage lender and that you can save thousands of euro over the life of your mortgage by simply shopping around for better value life cover.

Price Examples – based on 35-year-old couple with a mortgage of €200,000 with 25 year remaining.

	2 Non-Smokers	2 x Smokers
Best Price	€20.14	€35.79
Worst Price	€27.12	€47.32
Difference	+34%	+32%
Savings Over Term	€2,094	€3,459

Calling all Ex-Smokers

If you have been a non-smoker for more than 12 months you can expect huge savings if you take out a new policy.

Prices are dropping

As people are living longer, life cover is getting cheaper every year so anyone who took out a policy more than say 5 years ago should really go and get a new quote, you could be pleasantly surprise just how much you could save.

Get the term right

- What age does your life policy cover you to?
- Check now while you can still get cover at reasonable rates?
- Don't leave it too late.

At age 40, €100,000 cover to age 80 is €21.87.

At aged 65, €100,000 cover to age 80 is €113.44.

Understand Your Policies

The best advice I can give is to dig out your paperwork and bring it to an expert. A good broker will explain everything to you in plain English and give you peace of mind. Some broker will provide this service free of charge in the hope of getting future business or referrals off you. 🐛

New Extension to Canal House

Writes Barra Ó Crófaigh

Ballinasloe Training and Education Centre established in 1977 has been serving the community for some 35 years. The Centre is run by a Board of Management in partnership with the Probation Service, FÁS, Co. Galway VEC and the local community.

The Department of Justice, County Galway VEC and FÁS work in partnership to facilitate the programmes. The aim of the Centre is to enhance the educational opportunities of the participants, thereby enabling progression to further education and employment.

Canal House located at Harbour Road and 3 staff are employed by the committee a manager, supervisor and administrator. There are 10 tutors employed by the VEC. The red letter day for the Centre, its staff, Board of Management and its clients occurred with official blessing and dedication of the half million new Building last month. The celebration was launched by TD Ciarán Cannon, Minister of State for Training and Skills.

The new extension provides new classrooms, new demonstration kitchen, new construction lab and a variety of other facilities which will enable more course development. "Really this day is a testament to the current and past Board of Management and the staff of the past 35 years, in giving great service to the local and wider community and our youth in difficulty" stated Co-ordinator Mr. Pdraig Lyons.

"We have been fortunate to have key partners with the Department of Justice, the Probation Services, FAS, Co. Galway VEC and indeed the local community. The purpose and goal of the establishment is to enable positive change in



attitudes and behaviour to take place in the lives of learners and those at risk of offending. It is a place where people are given a real chance to make a fresh start and where a person is given an opportunity to address personal issues and have a new future. Respect for self, others and responsibility for one's actions embodies the ethos of the centre." 🐛

To contact Canal House Email: canalhouse@eircom.net or to contact Pdraig Lyons Email: lyons.p@canalhouse.ie

Show Society – New Line Up

Writes Barra Ó Crófaigh

Ballinasloe Showgrounds are the oldest show grounds in both Ireland and Europe, reaching the age of 173 this year. The Showgrounds remains one of only three located in a town. Run by a dedicated committee, the Showgrounds will host a number of new competitions and shows over the coming year. These will further cement Ballinasloe Showgrounds as a key venue for show jumping in Ireland.

The Spring League show jumping competitions over the month of April, with Spring League competitions taking place every week since March on alternate Saturdays and Sundays until Sunday, 22nd April when the final show jumping competition takes place. Everyone will be excited to hear of the revival of the October Show. Ballinasloe Showgrounds will host the Connacht Showjumping Championships over

the four day period of the show from Thursday, 4th to Sunday, 7th October. One of the most top competitions to take place during the October Show will be the Final of the Connacht Grand Prix Autumn Series. Summertime will also see the Ballinasloe Showgrounds



hosts the July Grand Prix Show over a two day period on Saturday, 21st and Sunday, 22nd. Speaking on the new developments for Ballinasloe Showgrounds Chairman, Fr. Christy McCormack, says "We are delighted to host the Connacht Showjumping Championships as part of the October Show. With the show jumping highlight of the competition being the Final of the Connacht Grand Prix Autumn Series we expect large crowds and high levels of interest in the competition. It's wonderful for our Showgrounds to host these competitions which will enhance the revival of the October Show." Entries are currently being received by the secretary of Ballinasloe Showgrounds. Entry forms are available to download on www.ballinasloeshow.com.

For further information Call 090 9642266 or Email computerandoffice@eircom.net



Nursing Home Resident Receives Fr. James Cullen Pioneer Medal

Thomas McGreevy, Millrace Nursing Home, Ballinasloe, receiving the Fr. James Cullen medal from Fr. John Garvey, ADM. Also included is Ms. Agnes Dignan, Chairperson of The Ballinasloe branch of the Pioneer's Association. The Fr. Cullen medal is awarded for long standing fidelity and witness to the association. Thomas, who is from Aughrim, Carrick-on-Shannon became a pioneer in 1934 and celebrated his 90th birthday on June 7th last. He has a long association with Ballinasloe and his many friends wish to congratulate him on achieving such recognition.

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Ada English Spring School Seeks Hospital Memorabilia

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

The Ballinasloe and District Soroptimists are busy putting the finishing touches to the hosting of the second annual Ada English Spring School - which is being held in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel on the evening of the 4th and all day Saturday the 5th May.

This year, the organisers are mounting a fledgling display of artefacts, photographs, uniforms and memorabilia in the lobby of the hotel for the weekend.

They are calling on past employees or families whose members were on the staff of the hospital to loan artefacts from all periods to the colloquium. The objects will be digitally recorded, folioed and mounted in the temporary exhibition before being returned to the owners the week after the Spring School. The objects will be insured during their time with the school. All families will be acknowledged for their assistance in helping to create the first Exhibit. Memorabilia for use will be selected by a heritage panel and can be left in to the Town Hall Theatre Dispensary Office during the hours of business up to 20th April. Merel Jansma the School Co-ordinator will screen on site any rare or valuable photographs at the Town Hall Offices.

The Spring School will open on Friday evening at 7.30 with a panel discussion on the role of Women in Irish Politics today, moderated by a key national politician with several well known female public representatives taking part. The School will then launch an Artefacts Exhibition and there will be an informal gathering of all past and current staff of the Institution. It is hoped that many families in the locality who have strong connections with the hospital will attend this hopefully annual event. A series of presentations on the four key perspectives



around the school will take place on Saturday - 1. Psychiatric Health, History and Service in Ireland, 2. Key Trends, Irish Women in Medicine, 3. The Living Legacy of St. Brigid's, 4. The history of the period 1914-1924.

The School has invited many distinguished scholars, historians and writers to come and reflect on the role of this outstanding woman of the first half of the last century.

The full programme for the school goes live on the official website www.adaenglishspringschool.wordpress.com on the 6th April. It is hoped that many people, even with just a passing interest in St. Brigid's will come along and support the project. Contact: Merel Jansma Email: merel@aoifeonline.com Tel: 090 9643779.

Garbally View Nursing Home

Garbally View Nursing Home is a family run business providing convalescent, respite and long term care for the past 19 years in Ballinasloe. The Nursing home is registered with HIQA and provides a variety of services for its Residents.



*If you require any further information please contact the Nurse in Charge on **Phone: 090 9642622 Fax: 090 9644278** or **Email: garballyview@gmail.com***

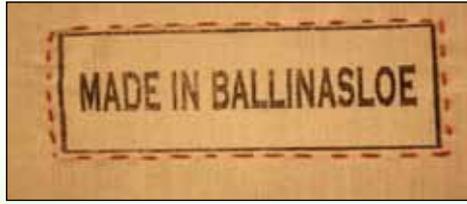
Group 8's *Made in Ballinasloe* Exhibition Launched in Town

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Group 8 a professional artist collective, launched their third annual exhibition of art and writing, *Made in Ballinasloe*, in Hayden's Hotel last month. A solid crowd turned out for the exhibition. The group was delighted to have the support of so many people from around the town.

Made in Ballinasloe was the result of collaborative work the group undertook around the theme of all things that are made in the town and its environs. With the closure of factories in the town large scale industry does not exist anymore. This exhibition explores the things that have been and still are made in town. 'Shoes are no longer *made in Ballinasloe* and neither are pens or circuit boards. Large scale industry does not exist So what is *Made in Ballinasloe*? Babies are made here. Art is made here. Boxers are made here and soccer players. Swimmers, dancers and musicians are made here. Cakes, actors, friendships and marriages are made here. Memories are *Made in Ballinasloe*.' Stated Nuala Ni Chonchuir spokesperson for the collective.

Group 8 is comprised of seven visual artists and two writers: Joyce Little, Visual and Multimedia Artist; Tommy Campbell, Sculptor; Grellan Ganly, Visual Artist; Úna Spain, Visual Artist; Brendan Grealy, Visual Artist; Nuala Ní Chonchúir,



Writer; Zara Little-Campbell, Writer; John Soden, Painter and Fiona Glynn, Textile Designer.

The group's aim is to be a non-profit, professional arts group, united in the belief that art, worthy of exposure, can express the vitality of a community and foster awareness, imagination and co-operative learning between the artist and their community.' The group will also host an annual poetry evening in November.

Made in Ballinasloe and its accompanying catalogue, was launched by Mr. Michael McCullagh. All that came to the exhibition were greeted by some of the best and most talented sculptures, photographers, textile works, video makers and artists creations Ballinasloe has to offer. Attendees were spoilt for choice and were treated by live poetry readings, music from The Bee Jazz band, and relaxed with a glass of wine. The exhibition went on for over a week to tremendous acclaim. Keep up to date on Group 8's plans for future events at www.thegroup8.blogspot.com



Above: Michael McCullagh launching the exhibition. Bottom: Some members of the public enjoying the exhibition.

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The Cover price is €2 each and all the proceeds go towards the production costs. The Board of BACD and the Subscribers will continue deliver 3500 copies into every local homestead, flat and business within the Ballinasloe Urban Area. The Magazine can also be read online at www.ballinasloeenterprise.ie

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Ballinasloe GAA News Roundup

Writes Cathal Croffy

As the GAA season begins to unfold there have been a few games played already in both the U21 Football and Hurling Championships.

Ballinasloe Under 21 hurlers have played three games, losing to Moycullen, Portumna and Annaghdown, which brought their championship campaign to an end. Mentors in charge were Manager Donal Tully, Tony Headd and Mark Ward. Well done to all the players.

Ballinasloe U21 footballers played in our new pitch and had a good win against Oranmore in first round. They then played Corofin in Quarter-Final of North Board A Championship, which was a very good game of football, but the home side lost out by a goal, which brought to an end their involvement. The huge crowd who came to watch were very pleased to have seen a great game of football. Thanks to the panel of players who came to training and the Management of Sean Riddle, Pat Cunningham, Cathal Coleman and Lloyd Kelly.

The club was also represented by three lads on the Galway U21 Football team. They played Mayo in the first round of Connacht Championship, losing in extra time. James Shaughnessy was at corner-back, Padraig Cunningham at centre-forward (scoring 0-2) and Darragh McCormack a member of the panel. Junior Football training is every

The Under 15 Panel, captained by Noel Cotton, with Manager Fergus Cotton and Selector Sean Kelly at the presentation night for the North League Under 15 Winners in Gullane's Hotel.



Wednesday and Friday night at 8pm. Their first league game is against Clonbur and will be played away on 31st March. The Minor footballers have two league games played, losing to Dunmore but beating Caherlistrane. On Tuesday 3rd April the U16's play Claregalway in Ballinasloe. The U11 and U12 footballers train every Monday night, under the management of Aidan Dooley, John Mitchell and Cathal Coleman.

Well done to Keith Kelly, who is currently a member of the Galway senior football team. He has started at corner-back for five games so far this season. The U16 ladies footballers have three games played in the league, winning two and losing one. In charge are Dan Moynihan,

Nicholas McDonagh and Clare Gallagher. In the first round of the championship they play Skehana-Menlough. U14 management is Sean Moclair and Debroah Casey. U12 management is Seamus Duffy, Miriam Grealy and Vincent Parsons.

Club membership is still being collected. The rates are: €100 for family, €50 per person and €30 for Juvenile. The Lotto draw is made every Friday night. Volunteers are always needed and any one interested in buying a yearly lotto ticket can contact Stephen Ruane.

Don't forget our Spring fund raiser Texas Hold'em in Gullane's Hotel on Saturday 21st April at 8pm.



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Ballinasloe Indoor Bowls Club



Writes Michael Kelly

Bowls is one of the town's least known sports and is played in St. Brigid's Dr. John R. Shea Hall every Monday night 7.30 - 9.30p.m. since the 1990's. The club competes in a number of inter club competitions in Connacht and the Midlands as well as its own members' competitions.

The Game is played on a special carpet 45ft long, 6ft wide. Bowls weighing 3-3.5 lbs are used with a weight bias on one side (the bias makes the bowl roll in an arc). The aim of the game is to roll one or more of your bowls closer than your opponent's bowls to the "Jack" which is placed at the opposite end of the carpet. Brief History of Bowls:- Bowls is a world wide game which has been played on Grass since the 13th

Century and on Carpets since 1940. The game catering for men, women and all age groups is becoming very popular in many parts of Ireland, with clubs in most Galway towns and three in Galway city. Northern Ireland has over 1,100 clubs.

Men and Women are all welcome to join the Bowls club. Instruction is Available. The first three nights are Free for beginners to sample the game. (Please bring or wear flat shoes or slippers to protect the Bowls Mat). After that the cost is a mere €3 per night.

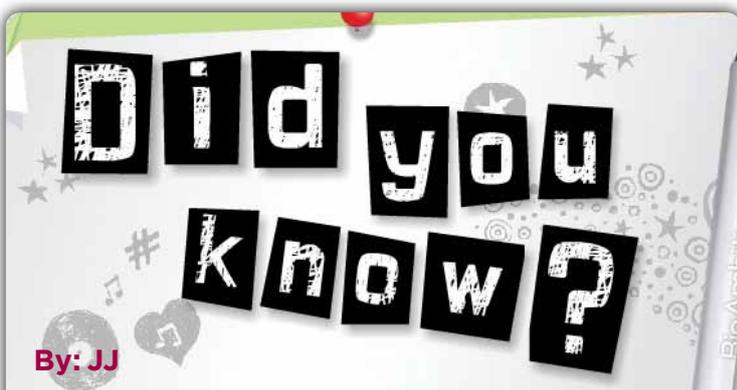
Hope to see you on any Monday night: For Further Information Contact: Sean Craughwell (Chairman) (9642679), Michael Kelly (Secretary) (087 6592642) or Ita Rigney (Treasurer) (9643728).



Left: Ita Rigney measures which bowls is nearest the jack watched by Ray Quinn, Cora Kelly, Dolores Fortune, Pat Keoghan and Keith Johnson.



Left: Sean Craughwell about to throw a bowl watched by fellow competitors Eugene Shields, Frank Dolan, Michael Kelly, Liam Keoghan, Brendan Kelly and Emmet Keoghan.



- The "East Galway Democrat" Ballinasloe's own weekly newspaper had the late Nicholas O'Carroll as its Editor when it ceased publication in 1949. Its best-known column was "Under the Lamp."
- Bishop Patrick Joseph Kelly, who retired as Bishop of Benin City, Nigeria in 1972, was born at Barnacraugh, Aughrim on 31st August 1894. He ordained his nephew, Anthony Kelly, to the priesthood in Clontuskert Church, in June 1977.
- The Urban Council was established in Ballinasloe in 1898 to succeed the Town Commissioners which was set up in 1841 with Rear Admiral William le Poer Trench as chairman.
- The Pines in Ballinasloe was the original seat of St. Joseph's College between 1900 and 1923 before they moved to Garbally, where it became the Diocesan Seminary for Clonfert.
- Michael "Cussane" Brennan of Ahascragh played in goal for both Galway's senior footballers and hurlers in the 1940's. He later excelled on the stage with the local Dramatic Society.
- Clontuskert schoolmaster, Frank Henry, was the first "King of the Ballinasloe October Fair" in the 1940's.

Ballinasloe Man A Key Part of County Senior Football Side



Writes Barra Ó Crófaigh

Keith Kelly, a primary School Teacher based in Limerick, is part of a new look youthful Galway outfit managed by Alan Mulholland a Salthill/Knocknacarra club man who led the Tribesmen to the All-Ireland Minor Football Championship title in 2007 and the Under 21 crown last season.

Kelly started corner-back on the Galway Minor winning side who beat Derry to secure the All-Ireland back in 2007 and Alan Mulholland has been a huge admirer of the skilful and tenacious corner back, so much so he gave him the nod in making his national league debut against Derry in Celtic Park at the start of this year's campaign.

Keith has stated on the record that "It was a good start, a real learning experience. There was four of us making our debut. There were a few nerves in the camp but with that the older lads came in and put their arm around us and gave us all the confidence we needed to go out and perform to the best of our ability."

The stylish left footed Kelly came through the ranks at St. Grellan's Gaelic Football Club and from a very young age it was evident that this lad would go far in his footballing career. His talent was mentored by coaches like Sean Riddell (Ballinasloe GAA) and Mike Tully and Steven Reilly when he studied at Garbally College. The Derrymullen native attributes on the football field

were quickly noticed by county level at a young age and he was part of Under 13 and Under 14 Galway development squads, Ted Webb Under 16 North Board team, as well as County Minor and Under 21 sides. He is a quality product of the youth system Galway football has been trying to establish over the last couple of years.

Kelly has started five games in the National League so far, against Derry, Louth, Westmeath, Meath and Tyrone with two wins, two losses and one draw. The Galway side is still in contention for possible promotion to Division 1 from Division 2 and it is hoped by all GAA supporters in the locality that Keith will be named in the Championship panel for the 2012 campaign.



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Seamus O'Brien Retires as Principal of Garbally College

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

Mr. Seamus O'Brien, who has been Principal of Garbally College since October 2006, retired at the end of February. Speaking at his function on behalf of the students Aidan Loughrey talked of Mr O'Brien's pride and determination, his commitment to 'Raising the bar' and his unceasing optimism which found expression in things being superb and fantastic.

College President Fr. Colm Allman said, "Seamus took to the job as a Principal who knew what was wanted. His ideas were expensive and fancy but never fanciful. They were all thorough and thoughtful and necessary. Things began to happen very fast. He was a man in a hurry to get this place moving. Old faded photographs of students and staffs were removed and newly painted corridors began to fill with photographs of present students and staff showing life in the school, there was nothing faded about these. They burst with colour, energy, beauty and optimism.

"There was lots of religious, educational and sporting icons also, all geared to inspire the present cohort. The Library was transformed and became a "living room" with colour, wall murals, technology and comfort - you would want to spend time in it. The School Canteen became a Dining Room, which would rival any modern restaurant. Sixth years got their own extension built. Old prefabs were replaced with New Buildings. Roofs were redone. Walls, ceilings and windows were updated to ensure comfort. He even had the heating system changed."



Retiring principal Seamus O'Brien receives a Papal Letter with the seal of Pius VII from Bishop of Clonfert, Dr. John Kirby.

Fr. Allman concluded: "I'm glad we were the College that benefited from his insights. His work stimulated the intellect and imagination of all the partners in education. It has been enlightening. Seamus knows that school, in its many facets, is at its best when it stretches us beyond our reach. Garbally thanks Seamus for all his work and wishes him the best of luck in his retirement."

On behalf of the Board of Governors Bishop John Kirby presented Mr Seamus O'Brien with a Papal Letter with the seal of Pius VII. He also received presentations from the Board of Management, trustees, parents and students. He is succeeded by Stephen O'Reilly former Staff member and principal of Ballygar Community College.

Creagh N.S. Principal Retires

Writes Ken Kelly

After thirty-eight years teaching at the same school, on his retirement has had the school hall named in his honour. Tony Broderick from Moher, Ballinasloe has been on the teaching staff of Creagh N.S. for the past thirty-eight years, twenty-one of them as principal.

Son of former Town Councillor Lily Broderick and her late husband Ambrose, Tony had seen many changes in the growth of the Creagh School during his term there. A highly popular and respected teacher, Tony's farewell day was marked with a certain amount of nostalgia and sadness, as he bade goodbye to his colleagues and the 425 pupils in the school.

One of the most emotional moments of his final day in late February was the unveiling of a plaque, dedicating the school hall to its former Principal, which will in future be known as "Halla Ui Bhruadair." Visibly moved by the announcement, Mr. Broderick said it had come as a great surprise to him and he felt deeply honoured.

The school's patron, Most Rev. John Kirby, Bishop of Clonfert; members of the Board of Management and the Parents' Association, along with the staff and pupils assembled to pay a fond farewell to a much-loved principal. Many tributes were paid to Mr. Broderick, led by Bishop Kirby, as well as the Chairperson of the Board of Management, Fr. Declan McInerney and the Chairperson of the Parents' Association, Mrs. Ann Lohan. Incoming principal, Ms. Stephanie Keating, spoke highly of Tony's commitment to the school over the years. Presentations were made on behalf of these various



Lily and Tony Broderick on the occasion of his retirement.

bodies, while Tony's wife, Lillah, a former member of the teaching staff of Creagh N.S., received a bouquet of flowers. A presentation was also made to him, on behalf of the 425 pupils at the school, by the four school prefects, Jane Corbett, Christopher Feeney, Kellie McGuire and James Ward. Mrs. Tara Galvin, Secretary of the Parents' Association, invited Tony to plant a tree, significantly placed beside the stone from the original Creagh N.S.

It was a day of mixed emotions and clearly a fitting tribute to a man highly regarded and respected by the school community. Quoting from Tomas O Croithinn's "An tOileanach" the incoming principal, Stephanie Keating, said "Ni bheidh a leitheid ann arís."



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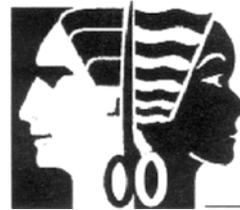
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Minister Visits the Ballinasloe Social Services Pre-School

Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs recently visited the Social Services Pre-School. Social Services is a voluntary organisation providing services to elderly, physically disabled, children and people in need in the Ballinasloe area.

It was formed in 1972, thus celebrating its 40th birthday this year and Minister Frances Fitzgerald was asked to come along and inspect the top class service the centre provides.

Administrator Teresa Coughlan greeted the Minister, accompanied by Senator Michael Mullins, on her arrival, where she was introduced to the Chairperson of the Board of Management, Annette Lynagh, with Pre-School sub-committee Chairperson, Dr. Kevin Connolly.

The Minister was then shown around the Pre-School facility by Childcare Manager Elaine Murphy and was then introduced to the children. She was provided with a demonstration of the Incredible Years programme which is an evidence based prevention and intervention programme to enhance social and emotional competencies in children and is holistic in its inclusion of parents. The Social Services are the first

pre-school to introduce this programme in the Ballinasloe region. The Pre-School was established in 1986 when a need was identified by Healthcare Professionals and Social Services Personnel to provide Pre-School facilities to the children of the immediate disadvantaged area.

The service which initially started for a specific disadvantaged area has developed to include children with developmental delays, speech and language difficulties, behavioural and mobility issues, thus extending the area served to approximately a 30 mile radius. It is open and flexible in supporting children and families from a wide range of social beliefs, cultures and environments. The Minister was then introduced to the parents before she was shown across

the courtyard to the Day Care Centre for a meet and greet with some of the elderly attendees. Currently, there are 3 staff members, who are trained to a high standard - Childcare Manager, Elaine Murphy, is currently studying for a Psychotherapy and Counselling degree with the view to supporting parents' needs, another member of staff has a degree in Early Childhood Care & Education and a further staff member has a FETAC level 6 qualification. The service consists of a morning session 5 days per week from 9.15am to 12.45 pm to which 18 children between the ages of 3 and 5 attend and an afternoon session 3 days per week from 1pm to 4pm to which 16 children attend, aged between 2 and 3 years. The service is part of the ECCE, CCS and CETS funding schemes.



Sen. Michael Mullins, Teresa Coughlan (Administrator), Minister Frances Fitzgerald TD, Committee Members Annette Lynagh and Kevin Connolly.

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AGM of BACD Ballinasloe Area Community Development

The 13th A.G.M. of Ballinasloe Area Development Company takes place on 18th of April in the Enterprise Centre, Creagh at 8.30pm. While all the usual items of business, the review of the Audited Accounts, the Chair and Managers Annual Report, Election of Directors will be undertaken, a special briefing is being given at the meeting from the Action for Market Town's Delegation. The team led by Seamus Duffy - Chairperson of the Board have lots of useful insights into how the Network leads and develops Town Centres in small provincial market towns

in the UK and how some of these ideas might be replicated here. It is obvious to many that retail patterns and footfall has dramatically changed over the past few years and a new way of thinking about how town centres have to re- animated to serve the needs of core clients and new have to be engaged with. Whilst the formal business of the AGM is directed by members, both the Board of Directors and the new Manager Lyn Donnelly are keen to see as many members of the wider community and public in attendance!

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The Ballinasloe Summerfest Returns May 24th – 27th



Writes Barra Ó Crofaigh

The Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce is once again profiling a Summer Festival programme into the annual calendar of events. This year however with Fleadhs and other activities it has been decided to concentrate the event earlier in the season and to coincide with the UK Bank holiday and tap into that market.

Spearheading the Project Group behind Summerfest is Councillor Cathal Concannon (Director of BACD, Chamber of Commerce) and he is confident that the new dimension of the earlier time and the Soccer Tournament will help improve the profile. "We were too late in the year for the past few seasons,

we need this event to signal what our town and its amenities will have on offer for the summer, so the Summerfest in late May is an ideal way to showcase what a visitor can do and see."

The Over 35 seven aside invitational soccer Tournament with a prize fund of over €4,000 will be an added boost for the weekend. Over 40 soccer teams from all around the country are expected to compete in the first Tournament of its kind in Ireland. Thanks to the team with Ballinasloe Town FC under Tournament Director Noel Lyons. It is hoped to be an annual hosted event for the new club facilities. All the Teams and their coaches will be treated to a Tournament Barbecue and Society Street party on the Saturday night with Pig Racing as an added attraction for young an old.

Festival Co-ordinator Maja Pegan is working with a small team to create the Suck River and Habitat as a strong theme running through all elements of the pre-event build up and for the weekend. Supported by Waterways Ireland, Ballinasloe Town Council, RAPID, Galway County Council and the Chamber as well as some private sponsors the Thursday to a Sunday event will include a Heritage Strand, an Arts and Cultural Strand and A Musical and Entertainment Strand.

Highlights will include Art Interactive Workshops and exhibitions for all interests and all ages, Suck Safaris, Heritage Trails and History Tours, Gardening Talks and Walks, Equestrian and Dancing activities, a swinging Pubs Trail and an Artisans Market. 27th Sunday May will see a huge Fun Cycle for the whole family from the Town Centre which will preceded by a High Nellie Race. Participants will have to pay a saddle tax and the proceeds will be going to the Children's Baby Unit in Portiuncula.

The full programme will be announced on the 3rd of May. Further details can be had by checking out the Facebook page Ballinasloe Summerfest: Ballinasloesummerfest@gmail.com

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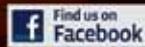
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