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AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 5 Issue 1: Apr '15 - May '15

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BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 5 Issue 1: Apr-May 2015

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REAMHRÁ



"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." Barack Obama.

Welcome to Volume 5 Edition One - Yours truly never actually thought we'd make it to our 5th birthday but here we are and huge mile buiochas to all those on the team that assist, comment, read and engage.

Lots of static on the dial of late about the demise of provincial /rural Ireland, the M50 centred economic recovery and flight of young people and resources from West of the line Malin to Mizen.

McCarthaighs RTE special made for distressing viewing, but this is history for slow learners - the Mayo wordsmith John Healy painted a similar portrait in the mid 60s with his "No One Cried Stop" Book on the demise of West Mayo villages.

Listening to some of the emptier vessels you'd swear the lifting of the cap quota as opposed to the delivery of serious broadband; is the panacea to all our provincial ills. There will not be an Athenry "Apple" for every provincial town in the audience.

The guts of sixty per cent of Ireland is urbanised, most noticeably in and around Dublin, where about forty per cent of the population lives on about ten per cent of the land, and one third of these people are originally from rural Ireland.

Balanced regional development might have a chance if you have other big cities to counterbalance Dublin, which is now about eleven times the average size of Limerick, Cork and Galway.

The challenge is for communities such as ours to stop looking at the glass being ½ empty or worse trying to reignite the glories of the past - we will never have a labour force with over 60% in manufacturing ever again.

The town benchmarking report, the Town team action plan that will emerge from it - fostering a community led revival; will pave a route that should see us inching our way past the empty shop fronts and negativity that at times can be corrosive.

There is a flight of young, entrepreneurial couples and workers leaving the M50 Metropolitan bubble of high rents and congestion issues - choosing the West to live and rear the young cubs - we need to be a location on the arterial highway that says Failte - this is good place to do business from, this is a good location to relocate to and we are community that will not be dependent on the indifference of the state to reach a sustainable and vibrant future.

Ballinasloe LIFE, through its pages, Social Media, and new website will continue to champion that message.

Le Gach de Ghui

*Colm Croffy, Editor
Ballinasloe Life.*



Many thanks to our subscribers who have come on board for Volume 5. The annual cost of your free bimonthly magazine is in the region of €50,000 so it does take quite a bit of support to make it a success. While it is hard to measure returns from advertising at any time, this project is more about supporting an extremely successful initiative promoting all that is good about our Community.

Through our company we have now taken over the ballinasloe.ie website and will be updating same over the next few months, please log in to ensure your Business can be located via this source and more importantly keep your website fully up to date.

We will have the Town Benchmarking report available shortly and are seeking the involvement of individuals and all organisations to work together to develop an action plan which is practical and will make a visible difference for the betterment of our Area.

Our AGM is fixed for Thursday the 16th April in the Enterprise Centre Creagh and you are all welcome. We are growing our membership and for the sum of €30 you can play your part in supporting us in the various initiatives we undertake and in the creation of new jobs.

It is encouraging the number of new enquiries we have received since Christmas, it augers well for a positive 2015.

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

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Michael Fitzmaurice - Our Newest TD

By Zara Hill

Replacing Luke Ming Flanagan in the Dail - a Glinsk native, Michael grew up on a small family farm, strongly aware and proud of his Irish roots. As a result of his rural upbringing, he became fully acquainted with the difficulties and obstacles faced by small farmers everywhere.

"I'm a rural Irish person and I'm proud of it. However I see Schools, Post Offices, Garda Stations, our Hospitals and our way of life under threat and this alone drives me to try and make changes locally and be involved in politics", states the TD.

Mr. Fitzmaurice is most-known for his role as Chairperson for the Turf Cutters and Contractors Association (TCCA), however Michael plays a number of important roles in the community - a life-long member of the GAA, he has played football many times in Ballinasloe against St. Grellans and has taken part in hurling and rugby along the way.

"I love all sports and encourage all youngsters to get involved", remarked the GAA fan who is married to Maria.

"I involve myself in all aspects of the community such as the Hospital where I have continually shown my support to the mental health services there. I am also involved in the Post

Offices and I play an active role in supporting farmers and fighting for the rights of all turf cutters around the town and indeed Ireland", added the busy father of three.

The former Toberroe National School student is constantly highlighting the problems faced by towns in Ireland such as Ballinasloe, however he has noticed that "Ireland has gone down a road of supporting numbers instead of protecting the most important thing which is the family farm".

"I believe successive governments have not protected the family farms and if this does not change they will continue to disappear", added a concerned Michael.

Mr. Fitzmaurice acknowledges the fact that this was once a thriving town with many successful businesses. However, he believes it has been neglected and needs to be brought back to its original potential by promoting the qualities of a great people, an educated workforce, great schools and a good Hospital.

"This town has huge potential, with an impressive surrounding road network and fantastic

amenities. It is disgraceful that the mental health services have been removed from a fine facility and Portiuncula does need extra staff as well as an extension to A&E. However, it is an exceptional hospital and offers a great service to this community which must not be forgotten" stated Michael positively.

Mr. Fitzmaurice has expressed his concern that due to the removal of essential services in town, such as those at St. Brigid's the youth are being effected, with many choosing to emigrate.

Seeing this as an important issue Michael remarked, "if you lose your youth, you lose your community. The more businesses that close, the more youth will emigrate and this is the harsh reality that has effected many families locally".

Working locally on local water and sewage schemes, Michael gained huge experience on how the whole system operates, "from source to tap" and among other things, he gained the valuable lesson of the importance of protecting sources and how to deliver "more efficient water systems".

Also a member of the Board of Management at Glinsk National School, Michael aims to initiate a "full insulation project in the school this year, which will allow the school to be recognised as a digital school and above all, this will enable students to receive the best education which will gear them for life", added Michael.

For 2015, Michael hopes to highlight the needs of our rural villages and towns.

"I will continue to stand with the people and make lives that little bit better and I will work tirelessly to make a difference in our great town" stated the straight talking T.D.



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New Loss Assessors Company For Town

By Zara Hill



A Ballinasloe native has recently set up a loss assessing company to help people who are unfortunate enough to have suffered damage to their property.

The Company is called RosGal (www.rosgal.ie) the brainchild of Paul Flynn. Paul is a qualified Chartered Engineer with over 20 years' experience in the property and construction sectors. His company is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

Most property damage leads to Insurance claims and during the subsequent claims process an insurer will appoint a loss adjuster to work on their behalf. Typically the loss adjuster works for the Insurer and not for the householder.

RosGal, on the other hand, works for you. They ensure that you get the best possible settlement your policy allows and aim to achieve a speedy and cost effective conclusion on your behalf. Whatever your property damage, large

or small, commercial or domestic, they have the expertise to guide you through the process.

If you are insured and you have suffered a loss, Paul and his colleagues will manage your entire claim from beginning to end. They will advise you at the start on how to make your property safe and secure following the damage and then help with every stage of your claim so that you receive the best settlement. A loss assessor is the only party in the insurance claims process who can be trusted to work entirely with your best interests in mind.

As part of RosGal's comprehensive service, they can:


- Secure your property, organising emergency works and arranging for alternative accommodation, if necessary.
- Identify the full extent of the damage.
- Prepare, present, and negotiate the settlement of your claim.

By appointing loss assessors as soon as possible after the damage occurs you will increase your chances of making a successful claim; you will also free

yourself from dealing with your insurers. Paul cannot stress this enough – for best results, you should appoint a loss assessor the moment you realise that you have to submit a claim.

Paul points out that one of the most important things people do not pay attention to is the value for which they have insured their property. All too often, people find out that they are inadequately covered after an event has occurred and then it is too late. The moral is if you are not adequately insured then you will face a short fall in the claim settlement.

To combat this Paul suggests that even though property costs have fallen dramatically over the last number of years, rebuilding costs have not reflected this. The rates insurance companies use to calculate the rebuilding costs of your property are sourced from The Society of Chartered Surveyors of Ireland website (www.scsi.ie). Garages, boundary walls and outbuildings should be included as well.

If you require any advice or have suffered a loss, contact Rosgal Loss Assessors on 087-9975048. 

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Four Locals Elected To County Council Strategic Policy Committees

By Zara Hill

Patricia Tierney from Atticorra, who works as a Manager with Ballinasloe Training for Employment Ltd based at Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, joins Galway County Council's Community and Environment Strategic Policy Committee.

Declan McKeon of McKeon Sand and Gravel, from Glantaun, Ballinasloe takes up a position on Galway County Council's Housing, Corporate and Recreation Strategic Policy Committee.

Dan Dowling from Ruane, Ballinasloe, a farmer and a retired cattle breeding assistant with a national cattle breeding company joins Galway County Council's Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee.

Tom Madden from Portnick Drive,



Declan McKeon



Tom Madden



Patricia Tierney



Dan Dowling

Ballinasloe, a farmer and an employee of the Probation Service joins Galway County Council's Roads, Transport and The Marine Strategic Policy Committee.

These positions became available to the community and voluntary sector through the realignment process that took place in local Government in 2014.

It is positive to see four people from Ballinasloe being successful in this

election process, which took place throughout the whole of County Galway in recent months. Ballinasloe Municipal District and its environs should be well served for the duration of the current Council with these four representatives.

Tom Madden was also successfully elected to the Joint Policing Committee for Galway County Council representing the Ballinasloe Municipal District Area.

Life Launch New Edition, New Website and Town Benchmarking Findings

By Zara Hill



Since its inception in 2011, the magazine has grown and developed from a 36 page magazine with a distribution of 27,000 copies to an average print run of 6,000 (peaking to 37,500 copies 2014) thanks to the ongoing support of community organisations and groups who have shown such wonderful support over the years.

Chairman of the BACD Seamus Duffy welcomed the large representative crowd – especially welcoming the local elected reps and the Acting CEO of Galway County Council Kevin Kelly as well as the Cathaoirleach of the Municipal District Area Council – Cllr Michael Connolly and Barry Egan Area Manager West of Enterprise Ireland.

Advertising and Circulation Manager Lyn Donnelly gave a very detailed breakdown of the income and costs associated with the project – noting that the magazine enjoyed some 72 advertisers of which some 44 were founding subscribers.

She paid tribute to the Transition Year students of Garbally College and the pool of volunteer drivers who ensure that within 3 to 4 hours of a Friday morning over 3,000 households in the town and old urban catchment areas receive their free copy. She also warmly thanked Ken Kelly who undertook the delivery of almost a 1000 copies to all the national schools within a 10 km of town and various nursing homes.

The growing on-line and offline readership of the publication with some 40,000 regular on-line readers between issue, Facebook and the blog – allied to the paper readership of some 7,000 was reviewed This is a huge potential advertising reach for the business community and some 16 new businesses were profiled by the Magazine in the last 12 months. Plans are underway to evolve the online content of the LIFE mag to an APP and the training supports that are now in place for the business users.

Sinéad Colleran, the PR and Office Manager with the HSE Community Games unveiled the new look of the Town's Official website – Ballinasloe.ie –and aiming to place our amenities, events, attractions and businesses professionally and properly on the Google map. Sinéad pointed out that the news and feature content for the Website would come from the Ballinasloe Life Magazine desk – including the bi monthly events guide.

The technology allows businesses once registered to divert the user to their own Facebook or website with more tailored information.

Seamus Duffy thanked Sinéad who undertook the build of the new website as a volunteer for her community and thanked the Council for allocating the old town council domain name to B.A.C.D.

The final session was the outline presentation by Chris Wade CEO of People for Places on the Town Benchmarking Report which saw unprecedented numbers of surveys being administered to the town centre users and indeed over 80% of the business community within the precincts of the town centre.

Whilst there was work to be done on the challenges – the foundation for a very successful niche provincial town is all at our feet. The full results of the town benchmarking on-line and footfall and business sentiment surveys will be made available to the community ; on-line by the end of April.

Chairman Seamus Duffy introduced & thanked Jacinta Divilly, the Town Team facilitator and her town team; who have been tasked with interpreting the data into an agreed issue list to feed into an action plan for community led local revival.

Where are they now? Sean Meade

By Ken Kelly



SEAN MEADE was one of Ballinasloe's best-known sportsmen, excelling in football, hurling and golf. Born in Portnick, Ballinasloe, Sean was a pupil at Creagh National School before receiving his secondary education and first taste of competitive football at St. Michael's Vocational School under the late Des Kelly.

Sean got his first employment with Dubarry Shoemakers, who were then located on the Station Road before joining Bord na Mona in Portarlinton. Two years later he moved to the ESB at the Rhode Station and then onto the Shannonbridge Power Station. In

1968 he was transferred on promotion to Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal where he worked with the ESB until his retirement in 2000.

Always a competitive player, Sean won a Co. Galway juvenile football medal in 1952 and also a Minor medal the same year. Two years later he captured a County minor hurling medal and played senior hurling with Galway in 1960 as well as playing with the province in the Railway Cup hurling semi-finals. After winning an All-Ireland junior football medal in 1958 Sean was spotted by the famous John "Tull" Dunne and promoted to the county senior team. He played in five All-Ireland football finals-1959, '63, '64, '65 and '66-and was centre-halfback on the famous three-in-a-row All-Ireland winning teams of '64, '65 and '66.

During that great era of Galway football, Sean (who was described by the famous Down footballer, James McCartan, as "the greatest footballer" he ever played against), won National League titles and played on both sides of the Atlantic. When he moved to Ballyshannon in 1968 Sean played club football with St. Joseph's and quickly found himself playing full back on the Donegal county senior team, a role he greatly enjoyed for two years.

Sean Meade loved his game of golf and teamed up with footballing colleagues, younger brother Michael (also a great Galway senior footballer) and "Pateen" Donnellan in the purchase and development of Barna Golf Course. Playing off a handicap of five, Sean's prowess on the fairways led to him winning several trophies and when he moved to Donegal he was honoured at the Bundoran Golf Club with terms both as Captain and President.



Sean Meade with the late Mattie McDonagh on All-Ireland day 1966.

Now domiciled in Ballyshannon, Sean Meade is still a keen follower of Galway football and regularly links up for a fourball with some of his former teammates where football and golf are the main ingredients of the day's outing.

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Jorena Official Opening - of Massive New Store

By Zara Hill

It is exciting times for John and Rena Kilcommins as their Health and Gift Shop, 'Jorena' continues to thrive after a successful twenty-two years in business.

The hard-working and dedicated



entrepreneurial team beamed with enthusiasm recently as they celebrated the opening of their new shop extension and expanded range of new products. A large turnout of family, friends, staff, contributors, retailers and customers were in attendance on the day to show their support and share with John and Rena their remarkable success story.

Since opening in 1994, Jorena has expanded greatly and now the Society Street health hub has a great reputation, attracting customers from all over its hinterland and at least five surrounding counties.

Jorena's diverse range of top quality

health products, combined with the skills and expertise of all Jorena staff; with Rena herself leading as fantastic role-model, are among the key attributes of this successful business.

According to John Kilcommins, Jorena is "privileged with excellent staff who provide a professional service in a friendly and confidential matter", which he believes has been pivotal to the success and enhancement of a great reputation, both locally and nationally.

John and Rena expressed their delight at the success of Jorena, remembering a time when the shop was just 400 sq. ft. "We have come such a long way and it is a very exciting day for us", remarked John appreciatively.

Jorena stocks all of the leading health brands that satisfy a large domain of consumer needs, including Ireland's leading supplier of homoeopathic and herbal products, 'New Vista' and their specialised supplements including; 'Vibracell', 'Turmeric', 'Immiflex' and 'Organic Noni Juice'.

Ireland's leading supplement brand of 2014, 'Revive Active' is very popular in store, with a range of products available all developed by the local Nutritional Company, 'Galway Natural Health'.

Liam Salmon from Galway Natural Health

Company has been in business since 2011 and now has 700 retail outlets across Ireland and the UK.

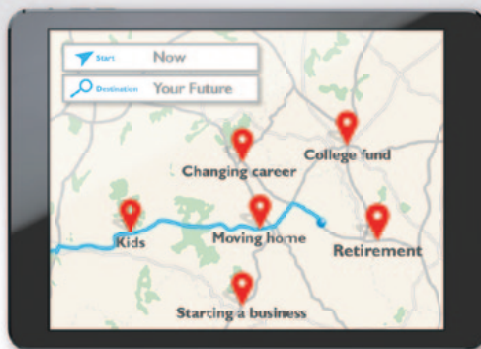
Speaking on the day, Liam remarked, "Jorena was one of our first outlets and they have always been very dedicated supporters of our products. I am delighted to be here today and I would like to wish John and Rena continued success in the future".

Also there to show his support was John and Rena's son Shane. The Head Professor of Law at the University of Limerick has seen his parents' business grow from strength to strength over the years. Shane happily remarked, "I am so proud of them because they tried. I think my parents have been very kind to people over the years and this is why they have been successful. Jorena employs three people and it is a business that has expanded in bad times which really does demonstrate how successful they have been".

John and Rena are looking forward to business in 2015 remarking, "business is good and the town and locals are very supportive".

Dr. Dillis Clare, Herbalist and GP joined John and Rena to open the new extension of Jorena and to introduce an impressive new range of gift ware, accessories, silverware, pottery, crystal, children's wear and luxury household goods.

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BEST Young Entrepreneur Competition Update

By Zara Hill

This year's BEST Competition has attracted a total of 81 entries from three of the local schools - Holy Rosary Mountbellew, Scoil Mhuire and Garbally College.

The 14 finalists who made it through



BEST 2015 judges John Power, Gerry Kelly and Pat Ward

the initial stage of the competition in November battled it out again in the most recent stage of the competition, in the hope of winning the annual

entrepreneurial competition and of course claiming the top prize of €1,000 for the winning project or group.

The Dragon's Den stage of the competition took place at Western Automation on March 4 and was the final chance for the 14 finalists to impress the judges with their project.

The students presented detailed proposals on their projects to a panel of judges including John Power, Gerry Kelly and Pat Ward.

According to John Power, a judge on this year's panel, "the 14 local projects impressed all of the judges with both quality and preparation".



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The judges have had a number of meetings since March 4 to select the winners, due to be revealed at the awards night on March 31 in the Shearwater Hotel.

The awards night will commence at 7.15pm and the public are invited to attend in support of the talented youth of the community.

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Men's Shed

P.R.O. of the local Men's Shed Martin Dolan has been a member of the club since its establishment in October and hopes to expand the shed in the coming months and encourage new members to join.

Originating in Australia, the Irish Men's Shed Association "offers a space for men to socialise in a non-judgemental environment to promote community education and share their skills", according to Martin.

At the moment, the organisation has 12 regular members, mainly retired and semi-retired men.

Men's Sheds have become very popular all over the country in the last five years, with over 200 sheds now established in Ireland.

"New sheds are opening at a rate of one a month", remarked Mr. Dolan who hopes to encourage some younger men to join the local club.

Men's Sheds are completely

open for anyone to join, designed for people who have time on their hands and need a place to go to socialise, learn new skills or even service their own equipment.



Liam Egan restoring a chair

Ongoing projects at the Men's Shed include the building of bee hives, wheelbarrows and bird's nests, as well as the refurbishment of furniture.

"We take on different projects and then sell them. Profits are then used in the running of the next project", stated Mr. Dolan.

For more information on how to join the local Men's Shed, contact Martin at 086 335 3152.

Ian Kenny Scoops Another National Award

Harbour Road, former resident Ian Kenny scooped the Kids Choice Award at the Irish Animation Awards, Dingle recently for their production of Brain Freeze, a children's science show for CBBC.

The Dublin-based animator, film maker and illustrator specialising in creating high quality digital content for clients such as BBC, RTE, Newstalk, Crossing the Line, HMM, Publicis, Rothco - has previously been honoured for his short animated film The Big Rock Candy Mountains which won Best First Short Animation, Galway Film Fleadh back in 2005 and his short horror film, Night Terror also screened at the festival in 2008.

The former Garbally student (son of Cora and Frank Kenny) worked with Boulder

Media as a lead key animator on Cartoon Network's 'Fosters Home For Imaginary Friends', after graduating at the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design. He also toiled on Nickelodeon's 'El Tigre' and numerous Disney shorts before joining his current company - Kiteen entertainment. Recent commissions also include animated design work for top international company presentations like Facebook.

Dingle has been home to the Dingle Film Festival and specifically Animation Dingle for the past three years. Created to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding creative talent within the Irish Animation, VFX and gaming industries, Animation Ireland's inaugural awards ceremony also recognizes and supports animation students with the Best Student Film category.

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Mike Bleahen Boosting Rural Broadband

By Conor Finnerty



Having worked in software for 20 years, Mike Bleahen has developed a new initiative that he hopes to expand and deliver throughout the community.

Mike remarked, "I simply couldn't survive - professionally or socially - without good broadband when I returned to Kilconnell in 2012 to look after my father. I looked at the options; with landline you're either less than 2km from a telephone exchange to get

reasonable broadband or less than 4km to get poor broadband; with line-of-sight the maximum speed, which is not your average speed, seemed low; with satellite I asked myself where's Niall Quinn these days with his line 'can you see the sky?'"


For Mike, mobile broadband was the best option in terms of speed, availability and in not having to build an infrastructure - Vodafone, Meteor and Three have already done that - the service he offers would quickly work out cheaper.

"I took several months to develop an App to facilitate installation, which no one else seems to have done and I've been installing 4G Mobile Broadband since last May. When I arrive on site people can't raise a Google Search page and when I leave they're streaming video in HD, on several devices simultaneously", added Mike.

Deciding whether to get broadband is different to any other household decision we make because broadband has permeated every aspect of our lives according to the business man.

"Without broadband it's harder to trade (DoneDeal), to query (Google), to be instructed (YouTube), to find important information (RIP.ie), to go away (RyanAir.com), to connect (Gmail & Skype), to be entertained (RTE, TV3, TG4 & UTV Players), to get journey directions (Google Maps) and to connect to social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)".

"Bad broadband is worse than no broadband because if you can't effortlessly go online then you won't go online and all the while you're paying a monthly fee for a dongle which doesn't deliver - you're robbing yourself".

For more information, or for a quote contact Mike at (086) 8137950 



New corporate headquarters for Connelly Construction

Local construction company - Connelly Construction have purchased the old Tesco shopping centre for their new corporate Head Quarters.

The large warehouse facility was first erected as part of the Dubarry factory complex before it was bought for the Crazy Prices of the late 80's and subsequently rebranded as Tesco and used as a shopping centre until Tesco moved to the new facility in Dunlo Shopping Centre.

Employing over 60 staff, Connelly Construction will use the premises and extensive parking lot for administration, technical support and fleet and machinery maintenance.

The Sarsfield Road premises was sold for a price in the order of half a million euro.

After five years of unuse, it will provide a busy focal point for Sarsfield Road and for the local entrepreneurs and extensive national civil engineering and construction business.

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Local is the new healthy – Marion Ruane

By Zara Hill

With a growing interest around the subject of health and healthy eating in recent times, local food blogger Marian Ruane believes people need to take control of their own lives in order to feel empowered by the belief that they can influence their and their families' health.

Passionate about the subject of healthy eating Marion remarked, "regardless of what literature you read on healthy eating, you will find one resounding theme – the importance of eating quality, locally produced foods".

There are many quality suppliers in the local area and according to food expert Marion, "there are so many reasons why we should be supporting them".

Business	Location	Time
Ballinasloe Country Market	Town Hall	Friday 9.30am-1.30pm.
Gannet Fishmongers	Croffy's Yard	Friday 8.30am-1pm.
Saturday Market	The Square	Saturday all day.
Growers/Producers		
Beechlawm Organic Farm	Farm Shop, local stockists & online web shop including delivery service	Main Farm shop, Tuesday 9am-5pm also open Monday – Friday.
Mulvey's Fruit & Veg	The Square	Mon-Sat 8am-6pm.
Oatfield Farm & Stables	Sonnagh, Ahascragh	
Grow It Yourself (GIY)		
Ballinasloe Garden Centre	Deerpark	Open 7 days – Sunday afternoon.
GIY Local Meet	Gullanes Hotel	3rd Wednesday of each month from 8pm.
Butchers & Foodhalls		
John Black	Supervalu, Brackernagh	Monday-Saturday.
Kevin Reynolds	Brackernagh	Monday-Saturday.
O' Connors Food Hall	Brackernagh	Monday-Saturday.
Seán Connolly	Creagh	Monday-Saturday.
Tony Carroll	Harbour Road	Monday-Saturday.
Other		
Jorena's Healthfood Shop	Society Street	Monday-Saturday

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In an attempt to make people aware of the local suppliers and food businesses within the town and the wider community, Marion has compiled a directory of food suppliers, based purely on local knowledge, which she promptly suggests we familiarise ourselves with.

"This is a starting point for the town/community which will evolve as new food producers come on stream – and indeed go".

Marion invites any producers or suppliers who wish to be included on the directory to contact her directly on her blog, www.bianatural.net or on Facebook at "Bia Natural".

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Pieta House Darkness into Light Local Event

By Zara Hill



Galway East Life Support are delighted to announce that 2015 will mark a significant milestone for the community and for GELS as the town hosts its first ever Darkness into Light 5km event for Pieta House.

The community will join 80 venues across Ireland on Saturday May 9 at 4.15 am for this symbolic event that invites people everywhere to walk together from darkness into light, in memory of those who have lost their lives to suicide.

Pieta is currently "the only organisation providing a professional, face-to-face, free service for people in the acute stages of distress", according to Pieta House Director of Fundraising and Advocacy, Tom McEvoy.

Darkness into Light is the most significant event on Pieta House's fundraising calendar and is a truly poignant event, representing hope and solidarity for those in distress, while symbolising the work of Pieta; bringing people from darkness into light.

GELS founder and coordinator of the first ever Ballinasloe DIL, Arthur Carr is thrilled to have the opportunity to facilitate this great event. He remarked, "it's a great honour for the town and we hope to give everyone a great experience".

With 80,000 people taking part in 2014, DIL aims to be even bigger this year, with over 80 venues expected to take part worldwide.

Ber Coughlan Treasurer, decided to get involved with the DIL committee, having had dealings with Pieta House in the past. "I got involved to give back something for the support I received", remarked Ber.

Also involved in the running of the event is Community Garda, Aiden Lonnergan.

"I have seen how suicide has affected families from all backgrounds and anything that helps to prevent suicide is to be supported" said Aiden.

Chairperson of the DIL Ballinasloe, Miriam Mullery remarked, "I am delighted to be part of this energetic group, helping to save lives".

The official launch of Ballinasloe Darkness into Light took place in March at the Shearwater Hotel.

GELS committee member David Carr was thrilled with the turnout for the launch. He remarked, "after meeting people from Pieta House and people who have been helped by Pieta House on the night, it is an easy decision to get involved".

In attendance on the night of the launch Pieta House Fundraiser and Advocate Tom McEvoy and speakers included Connacht Rugby representatives Pat Lam and Conor Finn. Also in attendance on the night was Geraldine Lynch from TV3.

Speaking on the night of the launch, Pieta House Director of Fundraising and Advocacy, Tom McEvoy remarked, "Darkness into Light is a great occasion that will certainly impact this community. We at Pieta house are grateful to GELS for hosting Darkness into Light in Ballinasloe and raising awareness about the work of Pieta House".

The GELS committee are looking forward to the 5km event in May and encourage people to get registering now rather than leaving it to the night of the event.

Early Bird registration €20 until April 10. From April 11, registration will be €25.

OAP/Student registration is €15 and Family (2 Adults and Children) registration is €65.

Register on line at now at dil.pieta.ie. OR at the Galway East Life Support Office in Cullens Yard, Main St. Thursday evenings from 7-8p.m.

For more information, contact GELS at (085) 802 1100 or email ballinasloedil@gmail.com

The GELS committee are collecting jam jars for the event, and would like to ask anyone who has jam jars to please drop them to the GELS Office.

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Charlene Hurley - National Fundraising Manager For Wheelchair Assoc.

By Zara Hill



Being a full-time working mother as well as National Fundraising Manager of the Irish Wheelchair Association, Charlene Hurley has been a busy lady since she moved to the town in 2005. However, whether there's a family day out or a fundraising initiative to be organised, Charlene plans to do it all with a smile.

From the small village of Loughanure in Co. Donegal, Charlene first came to the town in 2005 for work experience as part of her Degree at Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology.

Working with Colm Croffy at the Association of Irish Festivals and Events on Society Street, Charlene began assisting with projects and events taking place at the time, including the Ballinasloe Horse Fair & Festival and the Rose of Tralee.

Charlene's interest in event management sprang from an early age, extending back to her childhood when she grew up helping her dad organise the local festival, along with her older sister Pamela, a professional photographer.

Before moving to Ballinasloe, Charlene also worked with Earagail Arts Festival in Co. Donegal as Projects Coordinator from 2003 to 2006 while studying in IADT.

Charlene enjoyed working here, in a town she believed was continuing to flourish, so she decided to extend her work experience in 2006, "I loved it so much and when I was told I would be coordinating that year's AOIFE conference I ended up staying", remarked Charlene.

From there Charlene took over as Festival Coordinator of the Ballinasloe Fair & Festival in May 2007, remaining in this role for the 2008 and 2010 festivals. Her time spent organising the town's most popular annual event allowed Charlene to engage with and meet new people in the community.

Holding the responsibility of effectively managing the festival and growth of the event, Charlene "enjoyed the challenge". However, after three years she was in need of a new challenge.

An opportunity arose to coordinate North Tipperary's festivals including the Dromineer Literary Festival, Terryglass Arts Festival and Spleodar Nenagh Community Arts Festival.

Delighted to get the post in 2007, having studied Business Studies with Arts Management, Charlene described it as "an enjoyable job" which helped her "gain the experience and confidence" to go on to be the successful manager and woman she is today.

Charlene began her career with the Irish Wheelchair Association in August 2010 as Fundraising Development Officer and since then has slowly made her way up the ladder until she was promoted as National Fundraising Manager in February of this



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year. Charlene has really discovered her niche, describing her job at the IWA as the 'high point' of her career so far.

Charlene works with the local IWA branch providing a range of services to people with disabilities and other mobility impairments in the community. Each year, the IWA organise the Clonfert Diocese Lourdes Pilgrimage which is held from August 23 to 28.

"We are currently organising a Golf Event in July to help bring individuals to Lourdes. We are always looking for new members of the community to get involved in the branch", added Charlene.

Married to local man Niall Hurley, Charlene enjoys being a full time working mother remarking, "I enjoy the fact that each day is different from the day before. My role with the IWA is very rewarding because I know that each day I am helping individuals in my community", remarked Charlene.

As National Fundraising Manager, Charlene works with the local IWA staff, volunteers and branches to coordinate fundraising events and enjoys the social aspect of her job, liaising with people from all over Ireland.

Charlene is also settling into motherhood and enjoys spending quality time with husband Niall and son Iarlaith who she lovingly describes as "a charming little man".

"I enjoy my weekends, probably more now because I am a full-time working mum and I get to spend quality time with my family and especially my little man, Iarlaith. We generally enjoy

going for walks and enjoying the outdoors as best we can, living in Ireland and where possible we go for a weekend to Donegal."

Speaking fondly of the town that she now calls her home, Charlene remarked, "it is wonderful to see certain aspects

of the town getting attention, especially the Town Hall Theatre. There are many people who haven't stepped inside the Town Hall because they don't enjoy traditional theatre. However, the theatre offers diverse musicals, pantomimes, dramas and now the Cinema. It is a facility everyone can enjoy and a facility that many towns wish for."

The IWA's only national fundraising campaign, Angels takes place every November and this year Charlene hopes to expand her campaign to incorporate the VHI Women's Mini Marathon taking place on June 1 in Merrion Square, Dublin.

"We are looking for ladies from all over Ireland, including this town to fundraise and take part in the event for us".

If you are interested in supporting the IWA, contact Charlene by calling (090) 6471167 or email marathons@iwa.ie.



2015 Active Retirement Committee

Active Retirement Group

Following the recent AGM of the Active Retirement Group, members are looking forward to the next few weeks, with number of day outings and excursions lined up.

P.R.O. Douglas Rafter remarked, "we have a full programme of activities organised, with a spring and autumn break, as well as a number of day outings during the summer".

Mr. Rafter also added, "our walking group has really taken off and is going from strength to strength with over 40 members now participating regularly in walks at the Gaelic Grounds every Tuesday".

Elected at the AGM were; Assistant Secretary, Ann Duffy, Chairman, John Boland, Secretary Margaret Brennan, Assistant Chairman, Michael O'Hagan, P.R.O. Laura Naughton, Social Secretary, Maura Rafter, Treasurer Mary Slattery and assistant Jane Tracy. Douglas was appointed with an I.T. role.

Tidy Towns AGM

Ballinasloe Tidy Towns held their AGM recently. The following election of Officers took place:

Chairperson William Duthie, Vice Chair Michael Walsh, Secretary Pdraig Lyons, Assistant Secretary Declan McKeon, Treasurer Johnnie Walsh and P.R.O. Patricia Tierney.

The new Chairperson thanked the outgoing Chair Carmel Grealley and Treasurer Nancy Cregg for their Trojan work over many years.

The new team expects to build on the wonderful work that the previous committee has undertaken. They hope to increase the points in the National Tidy Towns Competition. The new chair and committee welcomes partnership and teamwork from all areas of the community and business sector.

The objective for the Tidy Towns committee is to work together to improve the overall look of the town for visitors and locals.

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An Garda Síochana – Supporting Safer Communities

By Conor Finnerty

In conjunction with Safer Internet Day which took place recently, local



Garda John Scully at 2014 Garda Schools Quiz

Gardaí have been busy engaging with the youth of the community, delivering Internet Safety programmes and creating awareness among Primary and Secondary School students.

In response to this initiative, local Gardaí John Scully and Aiden Lonergan have been promoting internet safety and creating awareness locally, through the distribution of Anti-Bullying DVD's and leaflets to schools.

Garda John Scully agrees that it is hugely important for young people to be 'Cyber Safe' and hopes to highlight the dangers of an increased cyber presence seen among children both locally and nationally.

"We have been engaging with the community recently delivering the

'Connect with Respect' programme to students in the local schools. It is part of our ongoing campaign to highlight the dangers of cyber bullying and how prevalent it is in today's society", remarked John.

With a significant 43% of teens aged 13 to 17 reporting that they have experienced cyberbullying, Garda Scully warns that "the internet is forever", meaning comments and posts uploaded to the internet can be seen by anyone, anywhere. "There really is no such thing as a delete button", added John.

The Gardaí have also been engaging recently with Youthreach members as well as trainees from the Canal House, a local service that delivers a number of FETAC courses and support workshops to young people and learners. Here John and Aiden have presented the 'Wrecked' programme from the RSA on road safety to trainees. A recent Karting outing took place with a group of young people availing of the Canal House Probation Services as part of the local Youth Diversion Programme. John Scully remarked, "a great day was enjoyed by all".

Garda John Scully and Aiden Lonergan recently visited St. Teresa's Special Needs School, where they met with some of the service users and got their pictures taken with the Garda squad car.

In addition, Gardaí have been on day trips with an Active Retirement Group, visiting Kilmainham Jail, The Dáil and Croke Park. The Gardaí continually support community organisations, and regularly aid the Social Services with the coordination of charitable initiatives such as Meals on Wheels as well as home-helps initiatives.

With over 30 people killed in farming accidents last year, Garda John Scully and Aiden Lonergan wish to highlight the following essential tractor safety checks to ensure the safety of people involved with machinery: Tractor drivers must be trained and fully competent, fit to drive, follow road safety rules, have a valid licence and insurance, appropriate PPE and ensure that correct parking procedures are undertaken at all times.

In addition, John and Aiden are constantly highlighting tips to prevent burglaries in the locality. Speaking of the issue, Garda Aiden Lonergan remarked, "an average of 1/3 of doors are left unlocked in houses. People need to start paying more attention to making sure all doors and windows are fully secured in the house and valuables are kept out of sight".

See www.garda.ie for more information.

For Internet Safety Guidelines, visit our blog at ballinasloelife.wordpress.com

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Fergal Darcy - Top DJ Talent

By Maureen Cahalan



Popular radio personality Fergal Darcy talks to Life Magazine about his experience working on iRadio, being an advocate for mental health and how it feels to be listed among the Hotpress Hotties Radio DJ category 2015.

"I was born on the 11th November, which if you do the maths, is roughly 9 months from Valentine's Day. There were quite a few babies born in Portiuncula

that November, which leads me to think I'm either from a town of romantics, or there were a serious amount of power cuts that February."

Fergal is known for his outgoing, confident personality and sense of humour both on and off air. During his teenage years he delved into all kinds of sports and activities, playing rugby, soccer with Moore Utd and football with Pearses.

"After my dad passed away I kept myself busy as a coping mechanism", remarked Fergal. "I was heavily involved in drama and had some great characters to steer me in the right direction. I loved the stage and John Boland was very good to me, always encouraging me to perform", added Fergal who still returns to perform in Panto.

Also a keen swimmer and lifeguard growing up, Fergal worked in the old pool with Dougie Rafter as well as the new pool following its refurbishment.

"Fergal and his family moved to Creagh after living in Garbally Drive for a year. "My mum and dad were both Ballinasloe natives, one from the Roscommon side, the other Galway, so as you can imagine tensions were always high on match

day", said Fergal amusedly.

Fergal has one older sister Cherida, whose vivid imagination and witty banter has always been a source of encouragement for Fergal in the entertainment industry.

With a budding personality from a young age, Fergal remembers being in a treehouse with a fisherprice tape recorder when he was just seven years old, interviewing a couple of Teddy bears. "I guess broadcasting was my destiny", remarked Fergal.

Graduating from DIT with a degree in Journalism and Irish, Fergal has been involved with iRadio since it all began in 2007.

"I was very lucky to be involved with the launch of the station and I have witnessed a lot of changes in the industry. When I began in radio it was all about phone calls, then text links and now social media is your main content driver".

Fergal brought home the PPI award for Light Entertainment Programme in 2008 and remembers being asked to say a few words.

"It was a surreal experience but I love that about our town. People are proud when you bring something home. They feel it's a win for them". Never forgetting his roots, Fergal added, "I have always been proud of my heritage and I owe a lot to this town. I would like to see the town restored to its former glory".

With a listenership of over 120,000 listeners daily, Fergal admits he has worked hard to achieve his goals, accolades and listenership and hopes to go national someday, describing it as "the next great conquest".

His many successes include, winning the SMEDIA award for

[Continued on page 18]



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Monica Meade - the First Lady of Fashion

By Ken Kelly

Ballinasloe-born Monica Meade who has been a fashionista to some of First Ladys in the United States for over fifty years has retired. Originally from Portnick, Ballinasloe, Monica emigrated to the USA in 1954 and became involved in the fashion industry, working from 7th Avenue in New York.

First working with fashion designers Key Selick, Monica became Sales Executive with Oscar Del Renta in the early sixties and organised fashion shows throughout the USA including Sacks on 5th Avenue, Nieums Marcus etc. Among some of the famous First Ladys that Monica organised private showings for were Nancy Regan, Laura Bush and Hilary Clinton, all wives of former American Presidents.

Monica's private collection was also

shown to Saudi Arabian Princesses in the Middle East while the Ballinasloe stylist also travelled to top stores in Paris, Greece, London, Italy and Spain with her entourage of models and top fashion wear. "I thoroughly enjoyed my work and working with such celebrities was a wonderful experience. I became quite friendly with the First Ladys in the White House and all of them loved the Irish" said the fashionista.

Monica, who received her early education at Creagh National School and the Convent Secondary school was employed at Dubarry before emigrating to the States. She is a sister of former Galway footballers Sean and Michael Meade as well as Eileen (Dolan), Nan, Eithne and Mabel (Madden).

Photo shows Monica Meade with former First Lady, Laura Bush.



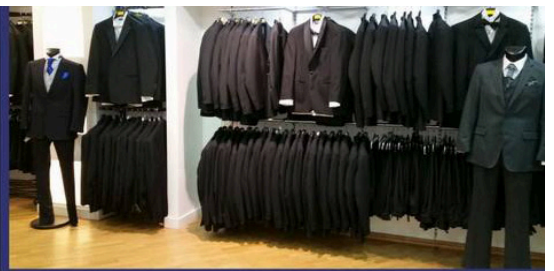
To Monica,
With very best wishes!
Laura Bush

[contd] a documentary on Mental Health in 2005, the PPI award for Light Hearted Programme in 2008, silver in the 2013 PPI Music Programme of the Year and most recently he spontaneously came third in the Hotpress Hotties Radio DJ category.

"I'm proud of the man I've become and proud to know I still have a long way to go. I've been lucky to have such wonderful friends and family around me to pick me up when I'm down and encourage me when I need a push".

Fergal has been delivering mental health awareness talks around the country recently. If you would like Fergal to visit your club or school, contact him at fergaldarcy@iradio.ie.

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Hospital Watch

By Zara Hill

Despite the recent national media hysteria over baby deaths and the horrible revisiting of the traumas of infant deaths for parents and families alike - the Dept of Health are undertaking an independent review - which will hopefully examine the underlying reasons why certain treatments and critical equipment has been denied to one of the safest regarded Maternity and General Hospitals in the country.

Good news for the hospital is that recruitment for seven consultant positions to be filled is underway.

The Health Service Executive recently approved a series of key consultant posts for Portiuncula Hospital as well as Roscommon including posts in medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, radiology, general surgery and anaesthesia.

These seven posts are to be based at Portiuncula and will be shared with the University Hospital in Galway strengthening medical teams in both Roscommon and Portiuncula Hospitals.

February brought great news with the confirmation from Denis Naughten T.D. that the hospital is getting a new 24 hour a day, 7 day a week emergency stroke service which will save local lives and link

Portiuncula with the top stroke experts in the country.

The new Teledoc (TRASNA) stroke machine is one of seven machines to be distributed to hospitals throughout Ireland and for will ensure that we have one of the best possible emergency stroke services in the world.



The roll out of the telemedicine stroke machine is currently in the first stage of delivery and must first be linked with the UCHG stroke team before staff training can begin.

According to local TD Denis Naughten, "with the strong history of Portiuncula building up links with other hospitals, it is hoped that these machines can be used to reduce the need to transfer many more patients to other hospitals".

In the meantime overcrowding in

Portiuncula has significantly worsened in the past year, according to figures from the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation.

Yearly analysis shows that 71 people waited on trolleys in the Emergency Department during the month of February last year, compared to 210 this year; almost a 200% increase.

Nationally, the numbers waiting on trolleys jumped by a third since last year. Of the six hospitals serving in the Shannonside region, Portiuncula saw the largest jump in numbers waiting on trolleys in the past year.

It is an increasingly worrying issue, as according to further figures from the INMO, Portiuncula is among a small number of hospitals in the country that has shown a year on year increase in the number of patients waiting on trolleys, with an increase of 75% since January 2014.

In late February St. Brigid's Hospital (or in Reality the Remainder of Mental Health campus in Creagh) was allocated 1.6 million euro for the provision of new High Support Accommodation. The investment is part of HSE plans to provide enhanced mental healthcare and disability services at St. Brigid's, despite giving back an underspend of some €6 million in the year previous for local mental health services.

Blossom Harp Ensemble Travels to France

By Zara Hill

Six young local harpists will travel to France this Easter, where they will perform at a very special fundraising concert as part of the Blossom Harp Ensemble.



Founder of the Ensemble, Elisabeth Affolter has been working hard with the 19 musicians who will travel to France - ranging from the age of eight to over 60 - and hopes to encourage people from the community to support this talented group of

musicians in any way possible.

Originally from France, Elisabeth has been living in Ireland for 30 years and has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the music profession, first beginning her career in Brittany as a 'Celtic' Harp Teacher.

Now living in Tuamgraney, County Clare, Elisabeth travels to the town once a week for lessons at the Shearwater Hotel and has certainly made an impression as a great teacher.

"Lizzie is a good teacher and encourages me to practice every day" remarked 14 year-old Árd Scoil Mhuire student, Alannah Downey, who has been playing the harp for four years. "I'm looking forward to playing as part of a group in France" added Alannah.

Beginning lessons in 2012, Elisabeth has developed a great relationship with the town and its various musical societies and now her idea to form the Blossom Harp Ensemble has become a reality.

"Music means playing with others and having been a member of the Irish Harp Orchestra, I became inspired to create my own "Ensemble" to allow all of my students to meet and play together" added the full time Harp Teacher. (see over)

Paddy Keane I.P.A.V.

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Together, with Fiona Ní Chonail - a harp teacher from Castleconnell - they organised an exchange programme for their young musicians.

Fiona remarked, "the children are absolutely thrilled now that they have met each other and are really starting to get excited about France".

"The aim is to start this exchange with the hope that it will continue over the next few years. I would love for the kids to grow up

with this" remarked Elisabeth.

The Blossom ensemble have been performing a number of concerts to raise necessary funds for the trip, including a foyer performances at productions in the Town Hall Theatre.

Elisabeth enjoys working in the town, saying it "seems to be alive culturally with a lot of sessions, concerts and clubs. Now my largest number of students are from Ballinasloe".

Other fund raising events taking place in the coming weeks are; a busking day in Galway City and a 'French Conversation Club' that takes place every Wednesday in town.

Harp Classes take place on Wednesday's at the Shearwater Hotel and are half an hour long, with a group session once a term.

For more information, contact Lizzie at 086 375 18 69 or lizzielisabeth@gmail.com

BACD Ltd AGM in Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre on Thursday evening the 16th April @ 8.00 p.m. All are welcome.

BEC

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An initiative of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.



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South Roscommon Vintage Club



2015 celebrates the 18th anniversary of the South Roscommon Vintage Club since its establishment in 1997. P.R.O. John Roche is looking forward to a successful year with the club as well as the annual Charity Food Run taking place in May.

The Annual Auto-Jumble took place in January at the Taughmaconnell Community Centre and welcomed "record-breaking" crowds who travelled from as far as Wicklow, Limerick and

Sligo to attend.

A Country Butter Making Workshop was available at the Auto Jumble as well as a successful collection of rare stamps.

The main upcoming event is the Annual Charity Food Run in aid of Cancer Care West, which will take place in May.

For more information, contact the club Secretary Liam Keogh at (087) 7565147.



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APRIL Events Guide

April 1st		
Active Retirement Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	3pm
April 2nd		
Progressive 25 starts	Downeys	9pm
Holy Thursday Children's Mass	St. Michael's Church	6pm
Ciorcal Cómhra	Gullanes Hotel	5.30pm
Mass of the Lord's Supper	Creagh	8pm
Mass of the Lord's Supper	St. Michael's Church	8pm
Open Music Session	Maud Millars	10pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
Social Dance Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
April 3rd		
Good Friday	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Stations of the Cross	Duggan Park	12 Noon
Service of the Lord's Passion	Creagh	3pm
Stations of the Cross	Duggan Park	7.30pm
Ken and Steve	Canal Bar	Late
Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm
GAA Fundraiser : The Pull	Town Hall Theatre	8pm
April 4th		
DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late
Night Owls: Live	Auld Sod	10pm
Red Tape	Maud Millars	10pm
The Suspects	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	4pm
Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	8.30pm
Bo Jangle	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
Easter Vigil Mass	St. Michael's Church	8pm
Easter Vigil Mass	Creagh Church	8pm
Polish Easter Food Blessing	St. Michael's Church	11am
April 5th		
Trad Evening	An Tàin	7-10 pm
Tom Wolf: Live	Auld Sod	10pm
Shane Moore	Downeys	8pm
Washout	Maud Millars	8pm
Too Tall Paul	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
The Chillbillies	The Pillar House	10pm
Mike Denver	Shearwater Hotel	Late
Easter Mass	Creagh	10.30am
Easter Mass	St Michael's Church	9am, 11am, 12.15pm
Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3pm
Ballinasloe Flower & Garden Club	Gullanes Hotel	8pm
April 9th		
Ciorcal Cómhra	Gullanes Hotel	11am
Bruno Groening	Gullanes Hotel	7pm
Open Music Session	Maud Millars	10pm
Singers circle	Dunlo Tavern	9.30pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
Social Dance Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
April 10th		
Trad Night	An Tàin	9pm
DJ Johnny F Live	Auld Sod	10pm
The Nudie Suits	Maud Millars	10pm
The Dunlo Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Pink Panter Jazz Band	Canal Bar	9pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm
April 11th		
DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late
Tradstone	Auld Sod	10pm
The Hush	Maud Millars	10pm
The Madden Family Band	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	4pm
Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	8.30pm
Christy & Mike	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
Joe Wynne	The Pillar House	10pm
The Happy Bar Stars	Canal Bar	9pm
April 12th		
Trad evening	An Tàin	7-10 pm
Sara O'Kane	Auld Sod	10pm
Country Music Mix with Johnny F	Downeys	8pm
Imposter	Maud Millars	8pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Derek Ryan	Shearwater Hotel	9pm
April 13th		
Mother's Union Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	8pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Pilates	Hayden's Hotel	Beg 7pm/ Advanced 8pm
April 14th		
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9pm
Ann Towers	Eyrecourt Library Opening	7.30pm
Bingo	Hayden's Hotel	8pm
Presidents Prize	Bridge Club	TBC
April 15th		
Trad Night	An Tàin	9pm
Active Retirement Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	3pm
April 16th		
Progressive 25	Downeys	9pm

Ciorcal Comhrá	Gullanes Hotel	11am
Open Music Session	Maud Millars	10pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	Evening
Social Dance Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
April 17th		
Trad night	An Tàin	9pm
DJ Frank	Auld Sod	10pm
Loose Rooster	Maud Millars	10pm
The Dunlo Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Eleanor McEvoy	The Pillar House	9pm
The High Reel	Canal Bar	9pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm
April 18th		
Last Man Standing	Hayden's Hotel	8pm
The Shakes	Auld Sod	10pm
The Wheeler Johnsons	Maud Millars	10pm
The livewires	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	4pm
Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	8.30pm
Geagan Pagans	The Pillar House	10pm
Backstage	Canal Bar	9pm
DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late
Galway Rose Competition	Clayton Hotel	TBC
Golf Classic	Creagh National Scool	
April 19th		
Trad Evening	An Tàin	7-10 pm
Sauce Mechanics	Auld Sod	10pm
Black Shadow	Downeys	8pm
Anchormen	Maud Millars	8pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
April 20th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Pilates	Hayden's Hotel	Beg 7pm/ Advanced 8pm
John Madden Trophy	Bridge Club	TBC
April 21st		
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9pm
Seán Kelly	Ballinasloe Library Opening	7.30pm
Bingo	Hayden's Hotel	8pm
Presidents Prize	Bridge Club	TBC
April 22nd		
Trad Night	An Tàin	9pm
Active Retirement Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	3pm
April 23rd		
Ciorcal Cómhra	Gullanes Hotel	11am
Open Music Session	Maud Millads Pub	10pm
Social Danse Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
April 24th		
Trad Night	An Tàin	9pm
DJ Johnny F Live	Auld Sod Pub	10pm
Strange Brew	Maud Millads Pub	10pm
The Dunlo Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm
April 25th		
DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late
Kings of Connacht: Live	Auld Sod	10pm
Toxic Twins	Maud Millars	10pm
Kensey 3	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	4pm
Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	8.30pm
Shane Moore	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
Joe Wynne	The Pillar House	10pm
Marley Road	Canal House	9pm
April 26th		
Trad Evening	An Tàin	7-10 pm
Too Tall Paul Live	Auld Sod	10pm
David Maguire	Downeys	8pm
Macey South	Maud Millars	8pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Ginger Biscuits	The Pillar House	9pm
April 27th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Pilates	Hayden's Hotel	Beg 7pm/ Advanced 8pm
April 28th		
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9pm
Sylvia Black	Killimor Library	7.30pm
Bingo	Hayden's Hotel	8pm
April 29th		
Trad Night	An Tàin	9pm
Active Retirement Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	3pm
April 30th		
Progressive 25	Downeys	9pm
Ciorcal Cómhra	Gullanes Hotel	11am
Bruno Groening-Circle of Friends	Gullanes Hotel	5pm
Open Music Session	Maud Millars Pub	10pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
Social Dance Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm

MAY Events Guide

May 1st					
Trad Night	An Tàin	9pm	Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod	10pm	May 16th		
Taugmaconnell Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9pm	DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late
Toxic wins	Maud Millars	10pm	The Wizard of Oz	Town Hall Theatre	8pm
Paul Watchhorn	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm	The Jordans live	Auld Sod	10pm
Ken and Steve	Canal House	9pm	Red Tape	Maud Millars	10pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm	Lynan Up	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
May 2nd			Sharon Turley	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late	Live Music	The Pillar House	10pm
Sway Live	Auld Sod	10pm	Panther Jazz Band	Canal House	9pm
The Fanzines	Maud Millars	10pm	May 17th		
Too Tall Paul	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm	Trad evening	An Tàin	7-10 pm
Bojangle	Hayden's Hotel	10pm	Sauce Mechanics: Live	Auld Sod	10pm
Ultan Conlon	The Pillar House	10pm	Country Music Mix with Johnny F	Downeys	8pm
Kids Handwriting Competition	Deadline	9am	Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
May 3rd			May 18th		
Trad Evening	An Tàin	7-10 pm	Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
The Crime Live	Auld Sod	10pm			
Shane Moore	Downeys	8pm	Pilates	Hayden's Hotel	Beg 7pm/ Advanced 8pm
Anchormen	Maud Millars	8pm	May 19th		
Best Foot Forward	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm	Unismil	Gullanes Hotel	5.30pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm	Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9pm
Vintage Club Charity Food Run	Town	TBC	Bingo	Hayden's Hotel	8pm
Live Music	The Pillar House	10pm	May 20th		
May 4th			Trad night	An Tàin	9pm
May 5th			Active Retirement Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	3pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30pm	May 21st		
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9pm	Ciorcal Comhrá	Gullanes Hotel	11am
Jackie Dolan	Woodford Library	7.30pm	Bruno Groening - Circle of Friends	Gullanes Hotel	7pm
Bingo	Hayden's Hotel	8pm	Open Music Session	Maud Millars	10pm
In Step Stage School: Topsy Turvy	Town Hall Theatre	7pm	Social Dance Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
May 6th			May 22nd		
Trad Night	An Tàin	9pm	Trad night	An Tàin	9pm
Active Retirement Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	3pm	DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod	10pm
In Step Stage School: Topsy Turvy	Town Hall Theatre	7pm	Strung Out	Maud Millars	10pm
May 7th			John Molly	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Ciorcal Cómhra	Gulanes Hotel	11am	Backstage	Canal House	
Open Music Session	Maud Millars	10pm	Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm
Singers Circle	Dunlo Tavern	9.30pm	May 23rd		
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10pm	DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late
Social Dance Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm	Tradstone live	Auld Sod	10pm
In Step Stage School: Topsy Turvy	Town Hall Theatre	7pm	The Weeler Johnsons	Maud Millars	10pm
May 8th			The Madden Family Band	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Trad Night	An Tàin	9pm	Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	4pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod	10pm	Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	8.30pm
Live Music	Maud Millars	10pm	Share Moore	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
The Dunlo Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm	The High Reel	Canal House	9pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm	May 24th		
May 9th			Trad evening	An Tàin	7-10 pm
DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late	Too Tall Paul live	Auld Sod	10pm
Pieta House Darkness into Light 5km	Emerald Ballroom	4.15 AM	Country Music Mix with Johnny F	Downeys	8pm
Hush Live	Auld Sod	10pm	Physical Graffiti	Maud Millars	8pm
Loose Rooster	Maud Millars	10pm	Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
The Suspect	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm	May 25th		
Credit Union Talent Show	Town Hall Theatre	8pm	Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Top Note	Hayden's Hotel	10pm			
Chris Nash	The Pillar House	10pm	Pilates	Hayden's Hotel	Beg 7pm/ Advanced 8pm
Happy Bar Stars	Canal House	9pm	May 26th		
May 10th			Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30pm
Trad Evening	An Táin	7-10 pm	Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9pm
Liam's Country Road Show	Auld Sod	10pm	Bingo	Hayden's Hotel	8pm
Sweet Sensation -Dessie Egan	Downeys	8pm	May 27th		
Imposter	Maud Millars	8pm	Trad night	An Tàin	9pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm	Active Retirement Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	3pm
May 11th			May 28th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm	Progressive 25	Downeys	9pm
Maisie Manning	Portumna Library	7.30pm	Ciorcal Comhrá	Gullanes Hotel	11am
			Open Music Session	Maud Millars	10pm
Pilates	Hayden's Hotel	Beg 7pm/ Advanced 8pm	Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
May 12th			Last Man Standing	Hayden's Hotel	10pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30pm	Social Dance Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9pm	May 29th		
Bingo	Hayden's Hotel	8pm	Trad night	An Táin	9pm
May 13th			DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod	10pm
Trad night	An Tàin	9pm	Strange Brew	Maud Millars	10pm
Active Retirement Meeting	Gullanes Hotel	3pm	The Dunlo Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Ballinasloe Flower & Garden Club	Gullanes Hotel	8pm	Amy Brennan	Canal House	9pm
May 14th			Country Market	Town Hall	9am-2pm
Progressive 25	Downeys	9pm	May 30th		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullanes Hotel	11am	DJ Mike	Hayden's Hotel	Late
Open Music Session	Maud Millars	10pm	Nightowls live	Auld Sod	10pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10pm	Live Music	Maud Millars	10pm
Social Dance Class	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm	Chris & Tara	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
May 15th			Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	4pm
Trad night	An Tain	9pm	Cinema	Town Hall Theatre	8.30pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod	10pm	Johnny O' Halloran Live Music	The Pillar House	10pm
The Hoppy Bar Stars	Maud Millars	10pm	May 31th		
The Dunlo Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm	Trad evening	An Tàin	7-10 pm
Freddie White	The Pillar House	9pm	Hush live	Auld Sod	10pm
The Wizard of Oz	Town Hall Theatre	8pm	Shane Moore	Downeys	8pm
Marley Road	Canal House	9pm	Imposter	Maud Millars	10pm
			The Livewires	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
			Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm

To advertise your events here, Contact: ballinasloelife@hotmail.com or Call 090 964 3779 or 085 148 1911

Paddy's Day Parade Results 2015

By Zara Hill

Educational Category:

- 1st place: Scoil Ui Chearnaigh.
- 2nd place: Newtown National School.
- 3rd place: English National School.

Cultural Category:

- 1st place: Sarah Clogher School of Dancing.
- 2nd place: Ballinasloe Sean Nós Dancers.
- 3rd place: Colohans Hardware Session.

Sporting Category:

- 1st place: Golf Club - "Celebrating the years".
- 2nd place: Ballinasloe Rugby Bronco's.
- 3rd place: Ballinasloe Camogie Club.

Voluntary Category:

- 1st place: Civil Defence.
- 2nd place: Ballinasloe Musical Society: The Addams Family.
- 3rd place: Active Retirement.

Commercial Category:

- 1st place: Hogan's Trailers.
 - 2nd place: Noble Trees.
 - 3rd place: Clarke's and Sons.
- Overall Winner 2015: Scoil Ui Chearnaigh**



Ciara Monaghan - The Voice of Ireland Contestant

By Zara Hill



18 year old Glentaun native Ciara Monaghan will be flying the flag for the town as she gears towards the live shows on this year's Voice of Ireland.

The youngest of the three Monaghan sisters, Ciara delivered a stunning yet powerful performance of Hozier's 'Eden' in her blind audition in February and now hopes to "win the voice of Ireland 2015", now that she has made it through to the live shows.

Growing up with music and playing the guitar, Ciara gained great insight into the world of music from her proud parents Ann and John,

"Mam and Dad played in a Country & Western band so I got it from both sides of the family", joked the music and sports enthusiast.

Ciara recalls her earliest memories as a child growing up with an interest in music, singing at the bottom of the bed with her sisters, "with hairbrushes, or so-called 'microphones'. Joe Dolan's 'Good Looking Woman' was always a hot favourite", remarked Ciara fondly.

Studying Sports and Recreation in Moate, Ciara is a high achiever and has had much success in her teenage years, becoming a Senior Soccer player in 2014, and participating in the Relay for Life as well as winning 'The Voice'.

"I sang with The National Children's Choir in 6th class with Creagh National School", added the Michael Bubl  fan proudly.

Ciara describes her experience on The Voice so far as "fantastic".

"Not only have I gained experience but it has boosted my confidence hugely. I have been fortunate enough to work with Kian Egan who has given me great advice on how to deliver songs and he's also a very friendly guy", revealed Ciara.

The 18 year old who plans to pursue a career in music is overwhelmed by the support shown by friends and family,

"The support has been second to none, I would like to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart, especially my cousin Brenda who has supported me since day one", said Ciara.

On a final note, Ciara added, "hopefully with the support from the people of Ballinasloe my dreams will come true".

Be sure to follow Ciara's journey on The Voice on RTE One, every Sunday at 6.30.

Stagewise 2015

The Unique Drama Summer Camp for Young People

By Zara Hill

Ballinalsoe based StageWise recently released details of its programme for 2015. Established twenty two years ago, its main activity is its Annual Residential Performing Arts Camp for young people 12 - 18 years. It takes place at The King's Hospital School, Palmerstown, on the outskirts of Dublin city from July 5 to 10.

The programme offers a tuition in a diverse range of performance skills including, Singing, Mime, Improvisation, Comedy, Dance and Physical Theatre. Participants are provided with a total of 33 hours tuition involving all of the tutors, as well as a full social programme each evening.

It has been the policy of organisers, Freda and Eamonn O'Donoghue to make this annual event inclusive, irrespective of previous experience or skill levels. Therefore while the focus is on developing each student's performance and creative ability to the highest possible standard, there is equal emphasis on helping each participant to develop skills in the areas of communication and expression.

The empowerment of young people is a very significant element of what StageWise aims to accomplish. This year's team of tutors, who are all theatre professionals includes Rowan Tolley, Mime Artist from Yorkshire; Robert Hyman, composer / conductor from London; Fiona Thompson, founder of Smashing Times Dance Academy, Belfast;

Kelly Shatter, Improvisation/ Acting tutor from Dublin and the Australian David Scott, tutoring in comedy.

Each year many students from Ballinasloe and its hinterland attend the event and already there is a lively interest in the course countrywide. As the event also has a strong international flavour the participants from all parts of Ireland will be joined by young people from international countries.

The many students who return year after year are testimony to the fact that there is no other experience quite like STAGEWISE.

Enquiries: Contact Freda 090 9643338 / 086 8750578, Email: stagewise@eircom.net web: www.stagewise.ie

Creagh to start a CoderDojo

Creagh National School hopes to introduce CoderDojo classes that will educate students on computer programming and coding. A pleaser for technical whiz-kids as well as those of a curious nature, CoderDojo is an exciting new initiative for the community that has something for everyone, including parents.

CoderDojo is a global volunteer-led community of free programming clubs for young people between 7 and 17. There are over 550 verified Dojos in 55 countries at present.

These classes aim to develop creativity, a sense of community, peer learning skills, mentoring and self-led learning with an emphasis on how coding can be a force for positive change.

Creagh N.S. hopes to start a Dojo class as part of an incentive to introduce students to programming from a young age and illustrate the enjoyable factors of working with computers and codes.

Children will be introduced to Open Source software such as Scratch, HTML, mine craft and Python as well as programmes that

will enable students to develop exciting games and interesting simulations. Other programmes that might interest pupils are APP development programmes and Web Design.

Dojo aims to inform children about what the computer is capable of doing, how our wishes and needs can be translated into instructions that the computer can understand and how our errors are diagnosed and corrected.

For start dates and information on how to book a place, visit the Creagh CoderDojo Facebook page.



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Avril Smyth - Fair Queen & Galway Rose Contestant

By Zara Hill



Teacher Avril Smyth did not anticipate the wonderful year that lay ahead of her when she was crowned Queen of the Fair in 2014. Since then, Avril has continued her great work as an advocate for Galway East Life Support, performed amongst a starring cast in the sell-out Addams Family Musical and now she will represent her town in the upcoming Galway Rose Competition.

Since her return to the town last July after teaching in London for four years, Ahascragh native Avril has delved into community life once again, taking part in many local activities.

An active member of the Galway East Life Support, Avril was involved in organising "In November We Remember", a memorial walk organised to remember the dearly departed.

As a result of this event, which sparked much interest locally, a committee was established soon after to bring "Darkness into Light" to the town for the first time.

Avril would like to encourage everyone from the town and surrounding parishes to come along on May 9 to support the event in aid of the fantastic charity that is, Pieta House.

Before Christmas, Avril got involved with the Musical Society and ended up being cast as one of the main Featured Ancestors in the fantastic "Addams Family: The Musical" which sold out six shows in March.

Loving her time in the musical Avril remarked, "the anticipation, the buzz, the comradery are just some of the desirable factors that attract me to musicals time and time again".

She added fondly, "there is something special about being part of a cast, creating a show with others to enthral audiences and to transport them away from reality for just a couple of hours".

Having attended St. Patrick's Day parades in London over the past four years, Avril was delighted to be back in her home town for this year's parade.

"This year I was fortunate enough to take part in the parade and I was chauffeured around in a beautiful 1939 Austin Goodwood vintage car, by the wonderful John McDevitt", added Avril happily.

Avril has had an eventful year and is now set on her next venture; preparing for the Galway Rose Competition which

will take place in The Clayton Hotel on Saturday April 18.

She has been taking part in the various events of the competition over the past few weeks including social get-togethers, interviews and briefings that allowed Avril to meet her competitors.

Speaking of the upcoming competition Avril remarked, "I am both nervous and excited about the competition. It would be wonderful to have a Galway Rose from this town as this has not happened in a very long time".



L-R: Sister Michaela, Avril Smyth, brother Ivan, Mother Deirdre and Father Christy. Taken at the "Queen of the Fair" 2014.

The Queen of the Fair added, "I have met so many wonderful people and I am honoured to be an ambassador and representative for the town and hopefully I can do the town proud by becoming the Galway Rose 2015". For further details on tickets or info on Galway Rose contact galwayrosecentre@gmail.com or 087 1474100.

Harley St Doctor reviews Revive Active Joint complex - made in Galway

"I personally am very excited with this product because most of the ingredients in Revive Active Joint Complex I have been giving to my patients for a long time."



Dr. Wendy Denning, Harley Street, London.

Most of us will suffer with intermittent pain, stiffness, and lack of flexibility in our joints as we age and this will have many running to the doctor to get painkillers, anti-inflammatory and even antidepressants to deal with this. The problem is that this may provide a temporarily fix but it will not cure the problem.

However a new joint supplement - Revive Active Joint Complex - has come on the market that contains "high levels of building block ingredients" that has been clinically proven to reduce pain, increase mobility, repair cartilage as well as reduce inflammation and even help with bone density.

I personally am very excited with this product because most of the ingredients in this supplement I have been giving to my patients for a long time, alongside

lifestyle changes, with good results. - MSM, Glucosamine, Boron, Vit C, Manganese, However we now have an 'all in one' supplement which is high dose (many are not high dose enough to effect a change) and it also has a new ingredient Peptan - a readily absorbable form of collagen which can be absorbed into the joints to help with cartilage repair and this along with the hyaluronic acid has been shown to reduce pain and increase joint function.

Not surprisingly there are some good personal testimonies for this product and I shall look forward to hearing many more as more people try it for themselves.

Dr. Wendy Denning is a Harley Street GP, who has been named 3 years in a row, in Tatler's top 150 private doctors.



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Seán Griffin – Local Defence Force Q.M.

By Zara Hill



Seán at a friend's wedding Summer 2014

Following a photo as part of the Local Defence Force Parade passing through Market Square in June 194, that appeared in the December/January issue, Christine Griffin from Derbyshire in England got in contact with us on behalf of her father Seán Griffin.

Sprightly Seán, was the Quarter Master of the Local Defence Forces during the Emergency.

Originally from Brackernagh, Ballinasloe, Seán Griffin was born on April 8th 1920, as one of six children to Thomas and Mary Griffin. His brothers and sisters were Christine, Betty, Patty, Mona and Brendan (Binny). He attended St. Grellan's National School until his was 15, achieving his Leaving Certificate and moving to the Technical School on Station Road where he studied shorthand, book keeping and joinery.

From there, Seán began his working life at Flanagan's Saw Mills on Society Street as an apprentice Sawyer and Furniture Maker. He moved to England in 1948, working in the building trade for seven years, followed by 20 years as a plant operator in the quarrying industry.

A qualified youth leader, football coach and talented musician, Seán has received awards from the local authority for his outstanding contribution to his community and to sport. According to daughter Christine, "he was still Secretary of Ashbourne Town Football Club until he was 90 and never missed a match".

Seán and his family return to the town every year, although the people he knew are now getting harder to find.

"Our last visit was in the summer of 2014 and we found the only person my Dad still knew in Brackernagh, Mrs Lily Broderick who was previously a local Councillor", remarked daughter Christine.

Speaking to Seán who loves receiving Life magazine at his home in the UK, he remarked, "I have lots of clear memories and stories about the town and I love returning each year. It is a nice town with lots of lovely shops and sports facilities", added Mr. Griffin.

Recognising her father in the picture, Christine remarked, "I had to use a magnifying glass but I can clearly pick

him out, even though he was only 20 at the time".

Seán, personally knew the other members mentioned in the article including Joe Mills who was a member of the famous Aughrim Slopes Ceili Band and John Madden who was his neighbour in Upper Brackernagh.

At present, Seán and John Leonard from Kilmalaw are the only surviving members of the LDF in that picture taken all the way back in 1940. Ms. Lily Broderick is thought to be one of the young girls in the foreground of the shot.



Seán in 1947 playing with the Dorothy Dunne band

Seán celebrates his 95th birthday this April and according to Christine "he is amazingly fit and still living completely independently in his own home. He really is a father to be proud of and I feel very lucky to have him".

Cu Launches Talent Contest - CU Factor

By Zara Hill

Have you got the Cu factor, if yes you could be on your way to winning the top prize of €1000 courtesy of Galway Credit Unions. Local Twelve to nineteen year olds in the area are being invited to share their talents as part of a new talent competition in the area organised by Ballinasloe Credit Union.

The talent show is open to all-comers, dancers, singers, bands, jugglers, lion tamers. The local final will take place in the Town Hall Theatre, on Saturday the 9th May. The top two acts will go forward to represent Ballinasloe Credit Union in the regional final on Sunday the 17th May in the Town Hall Theatre Galway with a top prize of €1000. The winners and runner up in the regional final will take part in the All-Ireland which will take place later in the year.

Speaking at the launch William Duthie Chairman Of Ballinasloe Credit Union said how everyone that took part, remembers the schools quiz and art competition that

the Credit Union ran, and continues to run, when they were in primary school." Now we have an event geared towards primary & secondary school pupils. The competition is designed to showcase the Talents of the youth in Ballinasloe and its hinterland. We have some very talented musicians singer and dancers in Ballinasloe and CU factor gives those individuals the opportunity to showcase their talent on the local Stage. I would encourage the youth of Ballinasloe to get involved this year" said William.

Anyone interested in taking part in Cu factor should log onto our website where they can download an application form. The application form is also available at the counter in Ballinasloe Credit Union. The closing date of applications is Friday the 10th April. Auditions are scheduled to take place on the 17th April with the final scheduled to take place on 9th May.

For more details check out our website / facebook page.

www.ballinasloecreditunion.ie follow us on facebook - ballinasloecu



Sarah Daly



Dancing Stars



Amy Costello

Out and About in Ballinasloe



DIL committee member David Carr, with Pieta House founder Joan Freeman and DIL Treasurer Ber Coughlan at the official Pieta House launch that took place in Dublin on March 10.



Taken at the Ballinasloe Launch of Darkness into Light for Pieta House at the Shearwater Hotel in March.



Bronagh Deane former student of Ard Scoil Mhuire receives excellence award from NUI Galway for 2014/2015 academic year



Arthur Carr making a wheelbarrow



*Creagh Training Centre Pancake Party February 2015
Presentation of proceeds to Ballinasloe Mental Health Association
Front row (L-R): Christine Kelly, Creagh Training Centre, Colette Murphy, Chairperson, Mental Health Association, Nikita Cosgrove, Creagh Training Centre
Back row (L-R): Bartley Boyle, Manager, Creagh Training Centre, Elizabeth Madden, Instructor, Creagh Training Centre & P.R.O. Mental Health Association, Kieran Mc Mahon, Treasurer, Mental Health Association*



Rev. Trevor O'Sullivan, John Kilcommins and Fr. John Garvey

Out and About in Ballinasloe



Fr. Colm Allman, Valerie Swanwick and Maire Hughes



Some of the congregation and participants who attended the World Day of Prayer Service in Ballinasloe 2015



The Bronco Girls with Irish outhalf Nora Stapleton in Oughterard.



Cast of the Addams Family musical

Town Hall Society Reviews Successful Year

Despite being effectively closed for about four months, the Society charged with the running on the community's behalf - the Town Hall Theatre - reported on a very successful 12 months with over 25 live performance nights and some 19,000 attendees to different events.

With an approximate cost of €160,000 in total for renovations to date, the management committee are continuing to investigate the sourcing of the financial aid required to create a modern vibrant performance arts and cultural space in the heart of the town.

As well as the very welcome allocation by the then Mayor Michael Kelly and his Town Council colleagues in November of 2013 of €87,000 for the complete renovation and refurbishment of the roof, in March 2014, the Town Hall committee made a successful application to IPB Insurances for funding to assist

with the refurbishment of rehearsal spaces throughout the building.

"We received €11,250 for this project and work was completed by Lockwood Construction. We also received a grant of €2,490 towards the repair of windows, from Galway County Council" added Chairperson Mary at their well attended AGM in Gullanes Hotel lately.

The Town Hall Theatre team put on record their thanks to Lyn Donnelly of BACD who was Project Manager and was a big part of the success of the refurbishment project which came in on time and on budget.

Treasurer Gerry Sweeny also put on record thanks to the Ballinasloe Jobs Club for the employment scheme operatives throughout the year who help with maintenance and to the TUS Galway Rural Development team for their allocation of crew to assist with elements of skilled specialist refurbishment and production support.

Chair Mary O'Connell remarked how lucky we were to have as a community the goodwill and continued co-operation of all the agency schemes who can prioritise the needs of the not for profit voluntary led organisations.

Among other projects discussed were the painting of the auditorium and the foyer by the volunteer crew, the purchase of cinema equipment thanks to a Credit Union Social Fund of €3,000 and the new rate card for local user groups.

The Audited accounts for the trading years previous were discussed as was the budget for 2015 which showed a venue merely washing its face with live performances, some licences to the building providing 85% of income with the balance having to be fundraised.

"The business model that we are building is to try and support a €200,000 development that will allow us to create the interior of a fully functional arts space that will live up to modern arts and culture needs, without losing the charm of the historic venue", remarked Gerry Sweeny.

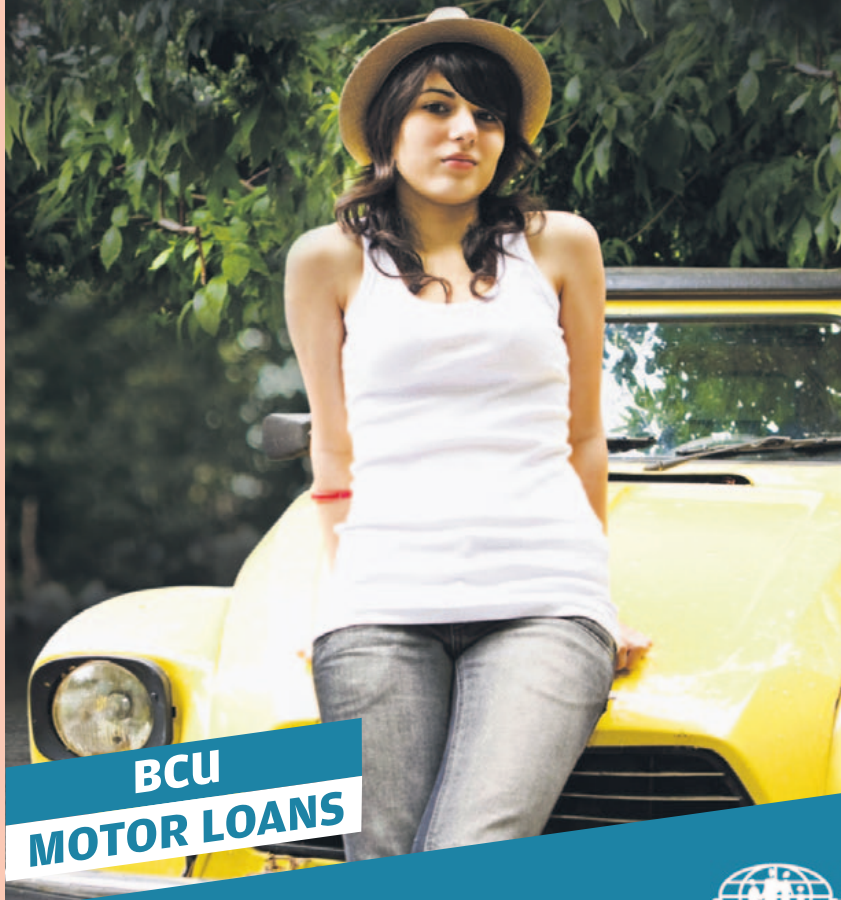
The committee are constantly in search of new initiatives and ways to encourage a wider use of the theatre and to build a more extensive performance based calendar, the arrangement of new Music rehearsal rooms for the Town Band from spring onwards is evidence of this focus.

At the moment the theatre is being put to use, with the recordings of promotional videos by local artists and drama schools as well as a weekly cinema programme, following the successful cinema launch led by Sunday Business Post representative, John McGuire on November 21.

Elected to serve on the Management Committee of the Society were Mary O'Connell, Gerry Sweeny, Colm Croffy, Brendan Tully, Joe Duane, Frances Leahy, Eoin Croffy, Davey Rafter and Pat McGovern.

Rev. John Garvey who stood down after some 8 years of being involved with the project was warmly thanked by the Society's members for his sterling efforts in securing a suitable mechanism for handover of the venue to community management.

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Ard Scoil Students Shine with Junk Kouture

By Rachel Black

Over the past few months, students in Ardscoil Mhuire have been busy getting involved in the creative 'Junk Kouture' competition, which aims to educate Ireland's youth about recycling, while inspiring them to use their imagination.

Junk Kouture, in association with Repak, is a national competition for secondary school pupils, which requires them to create an outfit made out of recyclable materials. Students had until early February to create an outfit from everyday items that would normally end up in the bin.

The exciting and innovative competition has been running for the past four years, priding itself in being the first recycled fashion competition in Ireland.

Out of the four contesting groups of girls at Ardscoil Mhuire, who got creative with recyclable items, just three made it through to the regional finals. The lucky finalists were Transition Year students; Aoife McGrath, Natascha Higgins and Niamh Carty. The students heard about Junk Kouture when a school teacher, Ms Áine Hackett explained the competition to them and encouraged the students to enter.

The three girls spent a total of three

weeks working on their unique outfit, eventually deciding on the name; '50 Shades of Purple'.

When asked how they came up with the name, Natascha said, "We thought it would catch people's attention as the movie '50 Shades of Grey' was coming out and there was great talk about it. It was also well suited to our outfit as our main colour is purple!", added the creative Transition Year student.

The outfit is made from recycled paper that the girls painted purple and used the lids of Celebration sweet boxes to make the top of the outfit.

The group entered themselves into the competition, and were thrilled when they achieved their place in the regional finals. In order to proceed to the next round of the competition, the contestants endured a four day online vote, which was worth 10% of the overall entry. This took place at the end of February and students battled it out against the other entries in the western region. The remainder of the marks will be rewarded when Niamh



TY student and Junk Kouture finalist Niamh Carty

Carty models the outfit for the judges in the semi-finals in the upcoming weeks.

Everyone in Ardscoil Mhuire wish '50 Shades of Purple' and the other entries the best of luck in the competition, as they've all given it so much work and dedication! 🍀

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Garbally to Stage Production of “Blood Brothers”.

By James Greally

Academic and sporting excellence have long been associated with Garbally College, but for some an introduction to the world of drama can be the highlight of their time in secondary school.



That tradition of hosting an annual dramatic production is a longstanding one and this year's instalment is Willy Russell's "Blood Brothers" which takes place in the college at the end of April.

Rehearsals are well underway after auditions, held at the end of December,

threw up the latest crop of budding young actors. The cast was selected from transition year students, as part of their T.Y. programme, and will also feature a number of budding actresses from the nearby Ardscoil Mhuire.

Set in Britain, "Blood Brothers" tells the story of fraternal twins separated at birth, with one brother raised in a family of great privilege and the other raised in poverty. Although coming from different backgrounds, the two boys end up becoming unlikely best friends, until a misunderstanding leads to an inevitable tragic end.

The two main characters in the play are brothers Eddie and Mickey, who are played in the production by Enda Donnellan and Nathan Donelan. Narrating the story are Mark Burnell, Maeve Madden and Donough Murphy, while Mrs. Johnstone

is played by Aoife Dolan and Mrs. Lyons is played by Róisín Lyons. The main cast is completed by Daniel Potter as Mr. Lyons, Natascha Higgins as Linda and Kevin Hendricks as Sammy.

Lead cast member Enda Donnellan is very enthusiastic about the production as preparations intensify towards opening night. "I'm enjoying the rehearsals immensely." "It is a new experience for me and I'm really enjoying the challenge". "I'll look back on it with fond memories after T.Y."

Fellow lead member Nathan Donelan is excited by the prospect of trying something new and is also looking forward to curtains up. "I was excited to try something I haven't done before". "I enjoy getting to play a character that's so different to myself - it's been a huge learning curve for me."

The show promises to be an enjoyable night out for all involved. Under the guidance of director Breda Atkinson, the cast and crew have been rehearsing tirelessly to make the best show possible.

So don't miss out! Be sure to book your ticket when they go on sale in Garbally soon. 🐸

Senator MICHAEL MULLINS

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'From Town to Township' - Cathal Craughwell in South Africa

By Zara Hill



Creagh native, Cathal Craughwell is an inspiration to all people young and old in the community. Growing up under the influence of his parents Michael and Mary, it might not have come as a

surprise to some when Cathal decided to pursue a career in nursing, following the footsteps of both parents.

Cathal studied Nursing at University College Dublin, before training in Mater Misericordiae in University Hospital Dublin. A determined scholar, Cathal hopes to continue his studies in 2015.

"I'm planning on focussing my career on a research masters later this year", remarked the former Garbally student.

2015 is certainly a significant year for the Creagh man who is participating in 'The Global Citizen Award', which celebrates the achievements of Irish global volunteers who challenge inequality.

Cathal developed an interest in the NGO sector having completed his studies in Dublin and recently spent 6 weeks in Kayamandi Township in South Africa, volunteering his skills as a Registered General Nurse. Here Cathal worked with NGO healthcare projects who address the health, social and emotional well-being of those living with HIV/AIDS.

With previous volunteering experience in Uganda in 2013, Cathal has witnessed first-hand the extent of the problem that is the HIV/AIDS epidemic that effects over 10% of the population in Africa.

Cathal describes the difficulty of seeing people cope with a HIV diagnosis saying, "it can be saddening and disheartening to see the disease as powerful and prevalent as it is today", before poignantly adding, "I'll never forget my first diagnosis".

"While figures suggest that the epidemic has reached a steady state, it can also be argued that the problem is not getting better with over 500,000 new HIV infections a year", stated Cathal.

Speaking of government policy in Africa, Cathal remarked, "although it has improved slightly in recent years, a problem that kills over 700 people every single day in South Africa deserves a stronger public message".

The majority of people in Kayamandi - where Cathal recently spent 6 weeks - live in informal dwellings and have limited access to clean water and sanitation. "Unfortunately, the living conditions are ideal for the proliferation of many other health related problems", described a concerned Cathal.

The town native has faced extreme challenges while working in the NGO sector including working in places with many different social problems including abject poverty, poor living conditions, high crime and unemployment.

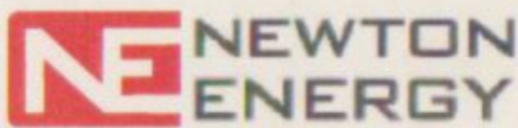


Despite the harsh conditions witnessed, Mr. Craughwell left the township inspired and full of hope and optimism, with a view in sight to continue raising awareness of this global issue.

"The people who I worked alongside in the community displayed a compassion for those most in need like none I have ever seen before, and it is hard to feel anything other than hopeful for the future", added an inspired Cathal.

Speaking highly of 'The Global Citizen Award', Cathal remarked, "it motivates returned volunteers to explore, share and inspire change at home as well as abroad. The ability to use the experience of what I have witnessed in order to raise awareness of global issues in my community is incredible".

When asked about his plans for the rest of the year Cathal explained, "I will continue to volunteer my time and skills in the NGO sector when I can and hope to remain a global justice advocate within my local community."



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Ballinasloe College of Further Education & Training

By Zara Hill



The College of Further Education & Training located on Sarsfield Road was first established as a Vocational School in 1939 and since then has expanded to meet the needs of a changing community.

2015 is a historic year for the college, marking its first year on the Galway/Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB).

Tuam native and college Manager, Bridie Dolan is "glad to be part of the team under the auspices of Galway/Roscommon Education and Training Board" and now hopes to continue to provide high quality accessible education and training programmes to young people and adults in the area.

With 202 learners currently enrolled, the college has grown since opening its doors to adult learners in 2012. Now the college offers a variety of FETAC level 3, 4, 5 and 6 courses to cater for varying interests. With 70% of students completing the QQI/FETAC Level 5 in

Healthcare Support going on to get jobs in hospitals, retirement homes and residential facilities as well as 10% of students' progressing to third level, the college has earned itself a good reputation.

Popular programmes at the college include; Early Childhood Care & Education, Healthcare Support, Horticulture, Information Technology Skills and Construction.

The Back to Education Initiative is a "flexible part-time training programme", according to Bridie and provides the opportunity for young people and adults to continue their learning, to obtain a national certification, develop new skills and pursue new and exciting employment opportunities.

Other services include The Community Education Service supported by the GRETB's Adult Education Grant Scheme, Local Training Initiatives for unemployed people and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS).

Speaking highly of the college, Bridie Dolan remarked, "it is an ideal facility for returning to Adult Education, with many positive attributes such as a very good

geographical location as well as an open, friendly and welcoming environment".

"We value our community and neighbours,



VTOS class. In the centre is VTOS coordinator Cathal Larkin.

often engaging with local groups and we depend on local service providers for work experience for our students", added Bridie.

The College currently employs 16 tutors, one Secretary, and one Manager/Coordinator and according to Manager Bridie, plans to extend the courses offered



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at the college are being negotiated.

“We want the college to be buzzing five days a week and in full capacity. We hope to look at the trends in employment and see where the gaps are in the market and then organise courses to accommodate this”, added the dedicated coordinator.

With a sharp eye for business and over 30 years’ experience in adult and further education, Manager Bridie remarked, “we have identified needs within the community and will be rolling out a basic Information Communication Technology

course to include the safe use of Facebook, Twitter, Skype and other basic ICT applications”.

Mrs. Dolan describes the college for lifelong learning as “a great resource for the entire community”, that aims to create opportunities for young people to get back into education at their own pace and more importantly, in their own community.

Bridie encourages anyone 16 or over who wishes to return to education to get in contact by calling (090) 9643479 or emailing bcfe@gretb.ie. 

Local Karate Class Masters

By Zara Hill



It is said that karate means “open hand” and most people understand the art of karate is to use hands and feet as weapons. However, there is another martial art, the ancient art of weaponry, called Kobudo.


The IKKI have studied this art as long as karate, for almost 40 years now. It was taught to the IKKI by Shihan Kei Tsumura, Chief Instructor of Shito-Ryu Itosu-Kai Karate, Canada. He in turn was

taught by and was the last person to be awarded a 5th-Dan certificate from the great Okinawan Kobudo Master, Taira Shinken, who passed away in 1970. Our Kobudo lineage is a short one.

Kobudo involves knowledge and expertise of 5 weapons, Bo, Tonfa, Sai, Kama and Nunchaku. Similar to karate, kobudo is studied according to a syllabus and takes many years to achieve 1st Dan status. Congratulations to 4 students who recently ranked to 1st Dan status, Larry Reynolds, Martin Ryan, Faye Mulvany and Jean Carter.

Junior Karate classes are held every Tuesday & Thursday in Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh at 6.30 - 7.30pm, followed by an adult class from 7.30 - 9pm.

Meanwhile, adult Kobudo Beginners Classes will continue to take place every Tuesday at 7.30pm.

For more information on kobudo & karate see: www.itosukaiireland.org 



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Growing success for Ballinasloe Town AFC Ladies

By Zara Hill



Amy Coyne and Heather Payne

It has been a successful few weeks for the local Amateur Football Club, especially for local girls Heather Payne and Amy Coyne, who both started their football education with the local football club.

Coached by Tony Coyne in St. Enda's in Creagh from an early age, both Heather and Amy progressed with their skills, resulting in both girls lining out for the Salthill Devon Team in early March, where they now "ply their trade", according to Jason Fallon of Ballinasloe AFC.

This appearance was an important one for the devoted athletes, as it was the

semi-final of the U16 Women's Umbro Challenge Cup, in which they went up against an experienced Shelbourne FC Side.

After a thrilling game that finished 3-3, local girl Amy Coyne ended her match appearance with a storm, scoring the winning penalty.

Jason added, "it was a fantastic result for the Galway side against a fancied Shelbourne team and the Ballinasloe women had a strong influence on the game".

Amy and Heather will now face Peamount Utd in the Final of this prestigious competition and Jason Fallon recognises this as "an achievement any player would be proud of".

Heather Payne is a talented player, with great enthusiasm and sportsmanship and made the U15 Irish Schools Squad, where she represented her school and club in England for the Bob Doherty Tournament.

This year Heather has progressed to the Women's U16 Republic of Ireland Squad and recently played an U16 Development Tournament which was hosted by Ireland where they entertained Austria, Denmark and Czech Rep.

Most recently, Heather had the privilege of captaining her country in a friendly in Cork where they played the Cork Academy side.

"A proud moment for Heather, her Family, Club and our town", added Jason proudly before saying, "I can see bright futures for both of these young women in the game".

Ballinasloe Town AFC have U8 Training on Friday evenings and U9 Training on Thursday evenings giving children the opportunity to enjoy football in a friendly environment while learning the basics to the game. Please contact the club for any information regarding football training of games. 🌱

Local Bred Horse "Call The Cops" Wins At Cheltenham



A local bred horse won the Pertemps Network Final, trained by Nicky Henderson and ridden by jockey Andrew Tinkler.

Call The Cops (9/1) laid down a strong marker for this race when winning at Doncaster 12 days previously.

This capped a successful 24 hours for his

dam Ballygill Heights following victory in a Huntington bumper by Beggars Cross who is a presenting brother to the festival winner.

The pair were bred by Martin Donnellan Ballygill and her first foal Ballygill Princess was also placed in a Galway hurdle. 🌱

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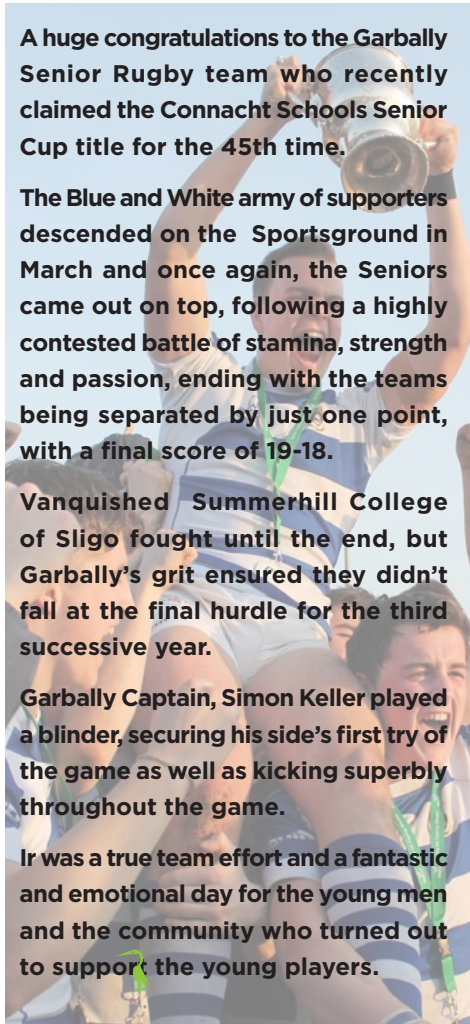
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Garbally Seniors Rugby Champions for 45th Time



A huge congratulations to the Garbally Senior Rugby team who recently claimed the Connacht Schools Senior Cup title for the 45th time.

The Blue and White army of supporters descended on the Sportsground in March and once again, the Seniors came out on top, following a highly contested battle of stamina, strength and passion, ending with the teams being separated by just one point, with a final score of 19-18.

Vanquished Summerhill College of Sligo fought until the end, but Garbally's grit ensured they didn't fall at the final hurdle for the third successive year.

Garbally Captain, Simon Keller played a blinder, securing his side's first try of the game as well as kicking superbly throughout the game.

It was a true team effort and a fantastic and emotional day for the young men and the community who turned out to support the young players.

National Minor School Swimming Championship

By Zara Hill



The swimming club has been very successful in recent weeks, with a number of young swimmers training exceptionally hard, eager to represent their town and schools and to fly the black and amber colours for their club.

Four members of the local Swimming Club represented Creagh National School at the National Minor School Swimming Championships held recently in the National Aquatic Centre in Dublin.

Taking place on Sunday February 8, the National Minor School Swimming Championship offered participants from schools throughout Ireland a tremendous platform to showcase their skills.

Creagh pupil James Mooney reached the final of the U11 boys Breaststroke Competition, putting in a magnificent performance to secure a National Silver medal in what was "an extremely close race", according to club Secretary Monica McKeon. The talented student James narrowly missed out on the Gold, although second is an extremely impressive result by any standards. James also swam well in the U11 boys Freestyle Competition.

Success continued with the girls, as Tara McKeon & Ruth Dolan both had great swims and made the final of the U11 girls' Freestyle final where they came in 9th & 10th place respectively. Ruth did exceptionally well on the day, also making the final of the U11 girls Backstroke Competition, where she finished in 4th place, a fantastic result for the young athlete. Tara also swam well and made the final of the U11 girls Butterfly where she came in 10th position.

Adding to the teams' success, Ava McKeon made the final of the U10 girls Freestyle where she finished in 6th place after an impressive swim.

Creagh School was very well represented on the day and certainly achieved a number of excellent results. There was a fantastic turnout of parents and families on the day, showing their support for these young swimmers", added to one parent.

Monica further remarked, "the standard at the Nationals is exceptionally strong. Just making it into the final of the Nationals is a great achievement as it places you in the top 10 in the country in that event".

On behalf of the club, Monica added, "Well done to Tara, Ruth, Ava and James who should all be very proud of their performances".

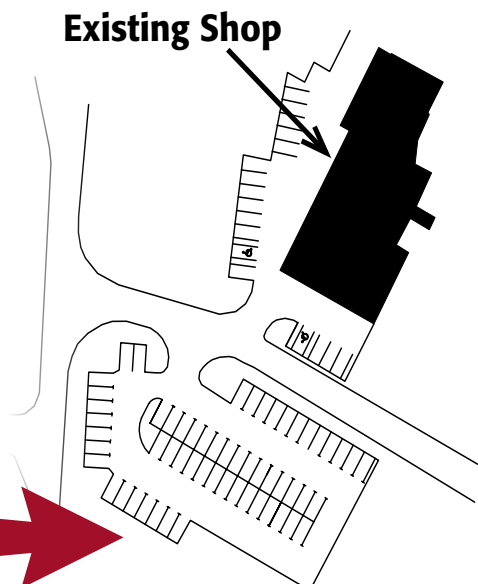
Ballinasloe Swimming Club expect to have more swimmers in the Nationals next year, seeing many young swimmers capable of getting there.

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Ladies Rugby Powering Ahead

By Zara Hill



The Bronco Girls team

Ballinasloe Ladies' Rugby Club has certainly come a long way in the past year, considering this time last year there was only one U15 team.

Since then, the club has expanded and now boasts two Youth Teams, U18 and U15 as well as a Mini Section catering for girls under the age of 12 1/2. From the initial 12 U15 girls that travelled to Buccaneers Rugby Club in September 2014 for their first ever rugby match, there are now over 60 girls playing for the local club.

March 14 marked a historic day for the

Ladies Youth team who played host to Regiopolis Notre Dame from Kingston, Ontario in what was a thrilling game - the first time the local club competed against a team from outside Ireland.

The U18's who have played numerous challenge matches, and have won three out of four league matches; a significant achievement for the teams' first season.

The U15's recently retained their League Cup Title, adding the Connacht Schools Cup and Connacht Blitz Cups to their impressive trophy haul. On March 7, they travelled to Terenure RFC to take part in the national 7 a-side Umbrella Foundation Tournament and once again brought the cup home having beaten the best in Leinster.

The Bronco Girls, who take part in the Mini's Section have participated in many one-day blitzes in Galwegians, Buccaneers, Oughterard, Claremorris and Tullamore this season and some of them will be progressing up to U15's next year.

Ladies rugby is still in its infancy in Connacht but "it is growing fast", according to Mentor Declan Murphy. "It's a great sport for all abilities and a great way to make new friends and keep



fit. We are always open to new members and it's important to note that most of the girls who have taken up rugby recently have never played it before. So it's never too late", added Declan.

If anyone is interested in starting or getting involved in Ladies Rugby, please contact Trish Tierney for further details (087) 917 6541.

Vintage Club

The local Vintage club are currently preparing for their third annual Auto Jumble Antique and Craft fair to be held in Carey's Equestrian centre, Creagh in the coming weeks.

An additional feature of this year's fair is the expanded artisan crafts stall that was a great success in last year's fair.

Returning this year is artisan blacksmith, Mark Wilson who will exhibit his mobile forge which entertained and educated lots of young children last year. Many children made their own trinkets for their mobile phones and thought this was a great attraction.

This year, Mark will be joined by a working farrier, which will complement the equestrian event that is also taking place in Carey's Equestrian Centre.

Other attractions are traditional butter making, woodcraft and special exhibits, many of which are joining the fair for the first time.

The traditional vintage display and road run is also set to take place in the outdoor paddock. The 1,800 sq foot indoor arena is booked out and laid out with many interesting stalls and exhibits to attract visitors of all ages.

One stall that has proven to be very popular over the last two years is George Carters extensive Tilly Lamp and paraffin oil collection and supply & sales.

The vintage club welcomes any local groups and can be contacted by email at bdvcvintage@gmail.com.

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Captains Drive, Ballinasloe Golf Club

Golf

The golfing season is off to a good start, with the Captain's Drive taking place recently.

The season was once again officially started with the annual event, the Captains'/President's Drive-In, that took place on Sunday March 10 at the golf club.

The Drive-In competition was a 3-ball scramble, sponsored by the Shearwater Hotel, with events taking place over Saturday and Sunday. With a great turnout of competitors and spectators alike, it was an enjoyable weekend for those who were present.

The winners were Iggy Colohan, Mattie Croffey and Micheal Galvin.

On a great occasion that was well attended all round, the President and two Captains made a surprising entrance, arriving at the Club in vintage cars.

The officials began the season with the traditional drive, taken by both the President (Celine Greenan) and the two Captains (Willie Dolan and Teresa Coughlan) off the first tee-box.

The traditional gesture was soon followed by a Variety Show of local talent taking place from 5 pm, which included Club Damhsa Sean Nós dancers, local musicians and singers.

It was fantastic weekend and augurs well for the coming year for the Club and its members.

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Athletics

By Zara Hill



The boys U12 boys relay team made up of Conor Harley, Adam McGreal, Shane Fitzpatrick & Charlie Naughton all put in a magnificent performance coming in 1st to take the Connacht Gold

It has been a series of fortunate events for the Athletics Club over the past few weeks, with Veronica Burke leading the club to success at a National level, turning every track to gold.

18-year old Veronica has been the one to look out for recently, exceeding in strength and discipline which has resulted in an exceptional two National All Ireland titles in under one month.

The Leaving Certificate student put in a spectacular performance in the Junior Women 3K Race Walk at the Junior & U23 National Indoor Championship in January, winning a National Gold Medal.

Just four weeks later on Feb 21, Veronica put in another electrifying performance to win her second National Gold medal in the Senior Women's 3K Race Walk at the Senior Indoor National Championships.

Her success continued into March when she was the first woman home in the Isle of Man Junior 10k race walk, held in the Isle of Man on March 7th.

"Despite the presence of top rate athletes from Ireland, Isle of Man and throughout the UK, not only was Veronica the first woman to cross the finish line, she did it in a faster time than all but one of the men", according to proud club P.R.O, Monica McKeon.

Monica added, "Veronica is such a great inspiration to all the young athletes in the club and we would all like to offer her a huge congratulations".

The Connacht Indoor Track & Field Championship was held in AIT on March 1st and saw the U12 boys relay team taking first place, securing the Connacht Gold. The winning team was; Conor Harley, Adam McGreal, Shane Fitzpatrick & Charlie Naughton, who all put in a magnificent performance according to Monica. "They had a fantastic time of 56.93 seconds which makes them serious contenders in the Nationals".

In addition, the girls U12 relay team made up of Shauna &

Emma Mitchell, Mya Kelly, Ava McKeon all ran well and came in 6th place.

Conor Harley & Shane Fitzpatrick both performed strongly in the U12 600m amongst very stiff competition, finishing in 6th & 7th position respectively. Adam McGreal also ran well in this event.

In the U12 60m, Charlie Naughton finished in 2nd place just .003 of a second behind the Gold medal winner. He took home the Connacht Silver Medal. Shane Fitzpatrick finished in 4th position, while Conor Harley & Adam McGreal also competed well.

In addition, the Ballinasloe District & Athletic Club AGM took place recently, announcing the following new committee members: Chairperson Enda Jennings, Secretary Anne Burke, Treasurer Tony Naessens, Registrar Mairéad Mitchell, P.R.O. Monica McKeon and Child Welfare Officers Enda Jennings and Monica McKeon.



Veronica Burke

Ballinasloe GAA 2015

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PAT O SULLIVAN	CONOR RYAN	MAIREAD MITCHELL
086 245 2561	087 244 4344	087 754 9713

	Football Chairman	Hurling Chairman	Ladies Football
	Seamus Duffy	Brendan Kelly	Sean Moclair
	087 250 6431	087 252 4249	089 413 6277
Under 6	Kathryn Gibbons	Damien O Neachtain	Kathryn Gibbons
	087 904 6140	086 050 9885	087 904 6140
Under 8	Dave McPhillips	Kevin Caulfield	Damien Clarke
	07 258 7058	087 212 2493	086 170 4241
Under 10	Brian Madden	Des Jennings	Damien Clarke
	086 083 7283	087 207 9175	086 170 4241
Under 12	John Killian	Brendan Hayes	Paul Madden
	087 227 0344	087 973 7526	087 918 2559
Under 14	Aidan Dooley	John Mitchel	Padraig Fahy
	086 349 9719	086 854 8041	086 894 3413
Under 16	Joe B Kelly	Eoin Hardiman	Seamus Duffy
	087 631 7817	086 050 9885	087 250 4631
Under 18	Vincent Parsons	Tony Headd	Sean Moclair
	087 247 6595	087 626 4951	089 413 6277
Under 21	Aidan Dooley	Donal Tully	-----
	086 349 9719	086 816 4581	-----
Adult	Pat Smith (Junior)	Tom Fenton	Sean Moclair
	087 286 0061	085 126 3245	089 413 6277
Sean Riddell (Senior)	087 956 3244		

Training Schedule on ballinasloegeeaa.ie

Membership now due - Adult €60, Student €40, Family €120

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The 4 Counties Tournament

By Zara Hill



Ballinasloe GAA Club are honoured and proud to announce the hosting of the inaugural 4 Counties Under 12 Football Tournament for the Walsh

Trophy, generously sponsored by Barry Taylor of Barry Cycles Ballinasloe.

Ballinasloe are following on the footsteps of near neighbours Clann na Gael who have been organising a most successful competition at Under 10.

Teams from Westmeath, Roscommon and Offaly to Galway, with the participating clubs: Moate and Athlone. Roscommon Gaels and Clann na Gael., Fербane and St. Rynaghs, Loughrea and Ballinasloe.

In recent years it has been difficult to provide meaningful participation for full panels at under 12 level. In this tournament its hoped that all players will get playing time and a chance to develop their skills. This tournament will hopefully help players and coaches to prepare for their respective under 12

competitions inter club competitions in their own counties later in the summer.

As well as preparing young players the venture also envisages the development of young referees within the 8 clubs. Young referees will be in the main, taking charge of these games.

The Walsh Trophy, a historic trophy in the annals of Ballinasloe GAA is lending its name to this competition previously presented to Cyril Dunne and Sean Meade two stalwarts of Ballinasloe and Galway Football.

The Club are extremely grateful to the juvenile football section of the club for their initiative and hard work in organising the tournament. Especially to John Killeen the overall co-ordinator of the venture.

GAA Club Host Comedy Show in Town Hall Theatre

Popular comedy show 'The Pull' has been confirmed for the Town Hall Theatre on Friday, April 3rd at 8.30pm.

Written by Mayo writers and actors Liam Horan and John Corless, The Pull based on an "unreal real event that may or not have taken place in rural Ireland," is currently enjoying a successful 50-night run all over Ireland.

It is set in the fictional town of Ballybore, where the local GAA club claim to pre-date the foundation of the GAA by some 130 years.

"It's about a GAA club that runs into some financial trouble, but it's not nearly as big a deal as they think. They set about trying to solve the problem and decide to pull a truck around their home town to raise money and get themselves in the Guinness

Book of Records. Chaos ensues and they end up getting in way over their heads", explained actor Liam.

The show starts at 8.30pm and admission is €10. Tickets can be purchased at Gibbons' Pillar House, Tel: 087 9046140 or from any GAA Committee members and on the door on the night.

Liam is a former Gaelic games correspondent of the Irish Independent, and creator of the popular Championship Man series on RTE Radio One. John is a well-known poet who has performed a number of readings in this region.

For more information, visit www.halfsolid.com/ballinasloe



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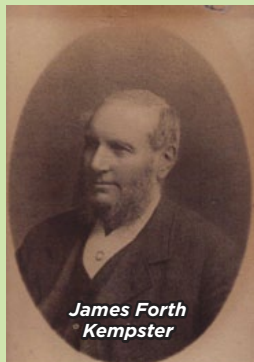
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Kempster – The Connections Continue

By Zara Hill



James Forth Kempster

Following on from the James Forth Kempster article in the last edition of Life, where we were introduced to the man responsible for the design and architecture of the town's most prominent stone buildings, keen

local historian - Seán Tully has since been in contact with Kempster's great granddaughter, Jane Leslie.

Jane Leslie now lives in Waterford and kindly sent some photos about her great grand-father James Forth Kempster.

According to Seán Tully, Jane "greatly appreciates her great grandfather's significant contribution to the construction of Ballinasloe from 1850-1900".

Some of the great projects of Kempster included superintending the erection of a large mansion for Lord Dunlo on the edge of Loughrea Lake, Corheen House at an estimated cost of £3,275. The mansion is now occupied by the Bishop of Clonfert.

Appointed as county surveyor at the very young age of 21, Kempster was also responsible for the significant project of replacing Craig's Hotel at the end of Main Street and the Bank of Ireland

Building on Main Street.

This beautiful building is described as three storeys over a basement, with the principal storey made of rock faced Ashlar. One prominent feature of the building remains to be the cut stone porch which is of a massive appearance. The contractor for the Bank of Ireland construction project was Clark and Seal.

Kempster was also the vision behind the gothic Convent Chapel. This was a monstrous project in its day, involving the construction of 6 bays 84' by 34', with a 40' tower and a 50' spire at a S/W angle. The project cost £2,300 and the contractor was again Clark and Seal. This building is being renovated currently to house the new Municipal library and has had all its external stone façade polished.

Kempster undertook many other projects in town including work in Garbally, St. Brigid's Hospital, Lisbeg House, Eyrecourt.

A significant listing of his many works can be seen on www.dia.ie/architects/viewkempster-jamesforth.

The apple certainly didn't fall far from the tree, as Kempster's son Henry went on to design plans for the large stone cross which was placed on Dunlo Hill for many years and was later erected in

Aughrim to commemorate the famous Battle of 1691.

Henry led a colourful life and after a number of years abroad, he returned to Ballinasloe to complete many more projects including an extension to Accumulator House, the Bakery House as well as ovens for St. Brigid's Hospital in 1904.



Kempster Teapot

The contractors for these projects were L.T. Ward, (Bakery House), M. Connell, (Accumulator House) and F.W. Mason & Co from Manchester supplied ovens and machinery for St. Brigid's.

Mr. John Hurley was appointed as the first baker in 1905, grandfather of Mr John Hurley, St. Joseph's. Incidentally, his father John Hurley was also the baker in St. Brigid's.

Jane Leslie's grandfather, Frank Kempster studied in Trinity College Dublin and was a very good cricketer, representing Ireland twice. He has the distinction of scoring the first century for Ireland against Scotland.

Mr. Tom Seale from Woodlawn found some of JFK's old drawings and had them framed by the Irish Heritage Council who have added them to their collection.

Garbally View Nursing Home

Garbally View Nursing Home is a family run business providing convalescent, respite and long term care for the past 20 years in Ballinasloe. The Nursing home is registered with HIQA and provides a variety of services for its Residents.

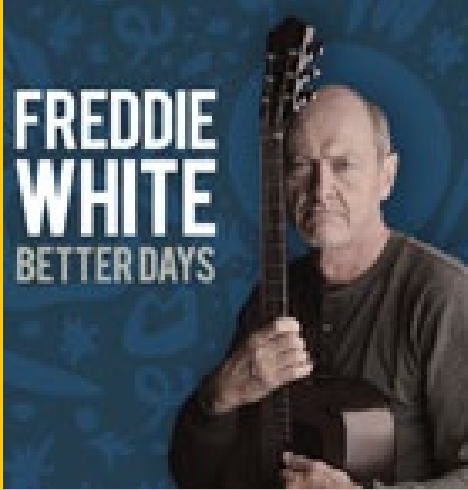


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Pillar House Folk Club Welcome Eleanor McEvoy & Freddie White

By Zara Hill

Having already this year played host to two superb gigs by Declan O'Rourke and Brian Kennedy, The Pillar House Folk Club



intimate 80 seat venue is gearing up for its next Folk Club Guests.

Ireland's internationally acclaimed singer-songwriter Eleanor McEvoy will make an appearance on Friday, April 17, while Freddie White will grace the stage on Friday May 15.

Eleanor McEvoy's latest album 'STUFF', an eleven-track miscellany, tells tales of unrequited love, lust and eloquent farewell; a heady brew of caustic observation laced with wit and wry self-deprecation typical of multi-instrumentalist McEvoy, all delivered in the Irish star's rich, lilting voice.

The Folk Club's May gig is with the inimitable Cork native, Freddie White. Freddie has been synonymous with music of the highest quality since the 1970's, his band touring with the likes of Eric Clapton. Whether interpreting songs by his

favourite writers or performing his own classy compositions, Freddie's live performances are nothing short of legendary.

Tickets are now available for Freddie's gig on Friday, May 15 and "have already begun to sell well for what will be a sell-out concert", remarked Kathryn Gibbons.

Tickets are available from The Pillar House. Tel: 090 96 43939 / 087 9046140. All tickets for the Folk Club are €20 and each concert begins at 9pm. Check out www.thepillarhouse.ie



Tennis Club Continue Search for a New Home

The Tennis Club are continuing in their efforts to establish a new home. The need to move came about following the expansion of the Rugby Club.

However, having only two courts seriously inhibits both ongoing tennis activities and the many activities planned for the spring and summer, such as inter and intra club competitions, and the very popular summer camps. Therefore, the need to establish a new home is now a matter of urgency.

Club spokesman Garry Zancanaro commented, "A number of much more central sites are being considered. A town centre location will greatly improve access for

players of all ages and increase membership and use of the courts, which will benefit not only the many tennis players, but the town as a whole, by providing new recreational facilities and bringing more activity and life into the town centre".

Garry added, "both Galway County Council and the former Ballinasloe Town Council have a good record of supporting sports clubs. We are most grateful to Galway Council and all the elected representatives for their interest and ongoing active support, which will no doubt prove invaluable, and are confident that we will soon be able to announce we have secured a new home for the tennis club."

Junior members can participate in supervised and organised sessions every Sunday, while open mixed adult sessions take place Wednesday and Fridays from 7-9pm. As well as this, junior coaching with professional coach Robert Johnson is held Saturday and Monday afternoons.

Annual membership is available from only €15 for juniors. Anyone can just turn up and try one of the open sessions before joining, or for more details call Garry Zancanaro on 085 112 4197, Declan McKeon on 087 915 9771, or Joe Staunton on 087 252 1424, or see <https://www.facebook.com/bsloetennisclub> For coaching contact Robert Johnson on 086 839 8776.

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The Bianconi Cars

By Barry Lally



A ruined coach-house in Birchgrove is locally the only identifiable memento of a man who was the nineteenth-century counterpart of Ryanair's Michael O'Leary in as much as he introduced and operated a cut-price, no-frills transport system in the Ireland of this day.



That man was Carlo Bianconi, born in Northern Italy in 1786, small in physical stature but great in business acumen. His family was well-to-do and Carlo was intended for the priesthood. At the age of 16, however, he abandoned formal education and became apprenticed to Andrea Faroni, a dealer in prints.

In 1802, Bianconi and his master arrived

in Dublin where they set up shop selling cheap religious images and topical prints. Eventually Faroni returned to Italy, leaving Bianconi behind to travel about the country peddling his wares.

Deciding that the life of an itinerant salesman was not for him, in 1806 he opened for business in Carrick-on-Suir as a carver and gilder, later moving to Waterford and finally establishing himself in Clonmel, which was to remain his home and the hub of his transport empire for over half a century. Having tried his hand at the bullion trade, the buying of gold to pay the armies engaged in the last phases of the struggle against Napoleon, in July 1815 Bianconi launched the enterprise that would make his name and fortune.

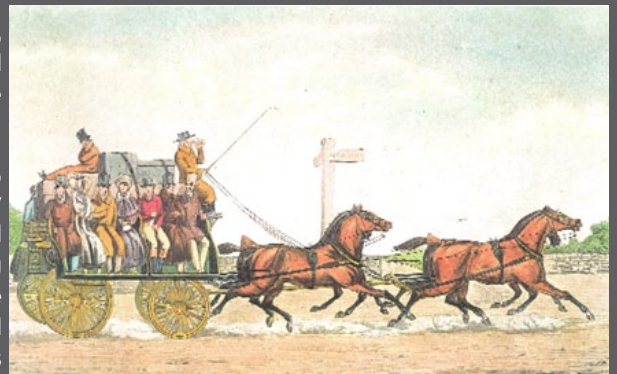
Tramping the roads of Ireland, he had noticed that the country lacked an inexpensive and reliable passenger service linking rural towns, since most of the public transport that existed was Dublin oriented. The times were auspicious for the venture he had in mind: highway robbery, the bane of the eighteenth-century travellers, had at least been stamped out; a new carriage tax

threw many side-cars on the market; and the ending of the Napoleonic wars made available a great number of first-rate, ex-army horses at cheap prices.

The initial route he operated was between Clonmel and Cahir with a one-horse, two-wheeled car. Business prospered, and by 1825 his cars were covering over 1,000 miles of roads each day, linking the principal

towns of south Leinster and east Munster. By 1831, his cars were running to Ballinasloe, calling daily on weekdays at Gill's (now Hayden's) Hotel on Dunlo Street. Horses were changed in the Mail Coach Yard at the back of Main Street, accessed through Iver's Lane beside John Wood's.

Bianconi's two-wheelers were known as "Massey Dawsons", but the vehicle most associated with his name was the long car of "Finn McCool", colloquially referred to as a "Bian". This was basically a four-wheeled, elongated side-car drawn by a team of four horses. Passengers sat back-to-back on



horsehair cushions facing the hedgerows. Since the cars were open to the elements, a lengthy journey in the cold and rain cannot have been a pleasant experience, though in wet weather a car was never allowed to go more than two stages without changing the cushions, and passengers were also able to protect themselves to some extent with heavy waterproof aprons which could be drawn up to the chin.

Although Bianconi was in time to operate some coaches on his routes, his open cars remained the main basis of his business, and he eventually had 100 vehicles travelling 3,800 miles a day calling at 120 towns, and 140 stations for changing horses.

Bianconi took great care of his horses but never overpaid his drivers, who received no more than the basic rate irrespective of length of service. He knew, of course, that they supplemented their income with tips from passengers and by charging fees for luggage which they pocketed themselves.

The advent of the railways did not, as might be thought, immediately sound the death knell of his business, for he turned the railways to his advantage by restructuring his route system to operate at right angles to the stations served by the trains. He thus complemented the railways by carrying passengers to and from those stations.

Nine years before Carlo Bianconi's death in 1875, he decided to break up his coaching business and sell it on favourable terms to his agents and employees.



Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre/Cinema
EVENTS PROGRAMME
April/May 2015



CINEMA

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DATE	SATURDAY MATINEE 4pm	SATURDAY 8.30pm
11th April 2015	Boxtrolls	Captain America – The Winter Soldier
18th April 2015	The Book of Life	Gone Girl (age 14+)
25th April 2015	Dolphin Tale 2	The Equalizer (age 16+)

PLAYS | CONCERTS | SHOWS

DATE	TIME	NAME
3rd April 2015	8pm	GAA play "The Pull"
5th, 6th & 7th May 2015	7pm	In Step Stage School "Topsy Turvy "
9th May 2015	8pm	CU Talent Show
15th & 16th May 2015	8pm	Majella Flanagan Theatre Company "The Wizard of Oz"

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Polish Easter Tradition for Local Church

In many Eastern European countries, it is a tradition to have a basket of food blessed on Holy Saturday or Easter Sunday.

Święconka meaning "the blessing of the Easter baskets," is one of the most enduring and beloved Polish traditions that takes place on Holy Saturday.

The vast majority of Poles visit the

church on Holy Saturday. The three-part blessing prayers specifically address the various contents of the baskets, with special prayers for the meats, eggs, cakes and breads. The priest or deacon then sprinkles the individual baskets with holy water.

To follow this lovely tradition there is a brief mass on Saturday 4th April at St. Michael's Church at 11am. All are welcome to attend.



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Ballinasloe History Walk

1 – Start at the statue known as *The Man with the Horse*, where Main Street joins St. Michael's Square. From the crossing near the statue, continue by turning right onto Main Street. The prosperity of Ballinasloe in Georgian times can be seen in the scale and classical style of the buildings here. A fine group of four frontages stand across from the statue of The Man with the Horse. With shops and pubs on the ground floor for the most part, these Main Street premises have several floors above.

2 – Walking along Main Street, lift your eyes above the shop frontages for one of the town's characteristic sights. There are the Diocletian windows that grace several facades. They are from the years after 1805 when the 2nd Earl was in charge. A window of this sort is formed under a semi-circular arch with two upright divisions so that the whole opening is divided into three parts.

3 – As you stand at the meeting point of Bridge Street and Main Street, you will see the Victorian frontage of a commercial premises, originally the Masonic Hall. Next to it stands a classical looking, beautifully-crafted, early 19th century stone house, currently a guest house. Beside these is a tall, fine stone-fronted classical mansion, which is now the Bank of Ireland. It was originally the town mansion of the Lord of all of Ballinasloe, the Earl of Clancarty. A friend of king George IV, the Earl was one of the architects of the resistance to the emperor Napoleon. It could be said that he was the person to whom most credit is due for the layout, growth and architectural character of Ballinasloe as we see it today.

4 – At the end of Main Street, head along Bridge Street, then turn to the right to the pathway which runs to the riverscape where you can see channels flowing through the several arches of the long stone bridge over the river Suck, one of the town's most precious monuments. The Bridge has been in continuous use since the 16th century and its extension in 1754 prepared it structurally to carry even the heaviest juggernauts of today.

5 – Walk through to the far end of the park; you will approach St Michael's Church (1852-58) that stands in a commanding position over the Square. Its architect was J.J. McCarthy, a follower of Augustus Pugin (famed for other Neo-Gothic churches in Ireland) – and the design is said to have been revised by Pugin himself. Inside are many fine stained glass window. Of particular quality are those of St. Patrick and St. Rose of Lima, of 1925, by the renowned Dublin Stained glass artist, Harry Clarke and The Raising of the daughter of Jairus by Patrick Pollen, inserted in 1958.

6 – From St. Michael's Church now walk up St. Michael's Square back towards the Man with the Horse Statue. Take a left into Dunlo Street, an important street in the history of the town, which contains, together with other buildings of about the same date, the late-Georgian Garda Station. The Station is towards the far end of the street, on the right hand side. Also on this street, over Dolan's Electrical Shop, you can see another fine example of Diocletian windows.

7 – Halfway up Dunlo Street, turn right up Duggan Street, which will take you to St. John's Church (Church of Ireland, 1843). It dominates the vast Fair Green which becomes a hive of activity during one week every year when up to 100,000 people throng to the October fair. Look out over the Fair Green and admire one of the grandest freestanding classical monuments in the region. Dedicated to Charles Le Poer Trench, it was designed in the Neo-Greek style by the English architect George Papworth (1781-1855). A mile past this monument on the Main Galway road, South West of the town, the Earl of Clancarty's former country house is situated, where imposing gates mark the entrance to Garbally Court. It has been a school since 1923.

Walk down Church Hill onto Society Street and turn left, arriving at the Courthouse on the right. Society Street, like Main Street, was the 19th century location for the professional classes. As well as The Courthouse, it contains the former Bridewell (or gaol) from the 1840s. Further along this street, Ballinasloe Railway Station is a must. Constructed in 1851, it is a Neo-Gothic limestone tour-de-force and a fine example of the quality of rural Irish railway architecture in the mid-19th century.

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