

# BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 10 Issue 5: Dec '20 - Jan '21



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PARKING**  
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DAILY

Photo by Robert Riddell

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# REAMHRA

Welcome to Volume 10 issue 5

Imagine this in the 9<sup>th</sup> Christmas Edition that I have had the privilege to co-ordinate and edit. It is also my second time in a lockdown! To ask PROS and community volunteers to try and write up what they have been at for the past two months and what they plan to undertake for the next 8 weeks is nigh impossible-but we have managed to pack out our 64 pages of an uplifting read.

My sincere thanks to everyone who helped, especially the contributors. My esteemed and heartfelt thanks to Ken Kelly of this parish whose unassuming work with reports, proofing and deliveries is Herculean and 3 lockdown editions could not have happened without him.

Its difficult to inflate our annual communal high point with so much lack of traditional content – normally this publication would be bulging with PANTO, Xmas Shows, Fundraisers, Craft Fairs, Recitals, Whist drives and celebrations. It is not, and we are not having a peacetime Christmas or New Year.

How giddy we get in throwing caution to the wind and going mad in full throttle under the Mistletoe - with no one looking - will determine how long we remain billeted back in lockdown-maybe not country wide but county by county until vaccines and science come fully to our aid. Till then we have to rely on our intelligence and that is a shaky premise.

Having lived through a Christmastime bereavement, I am acutely aware of those, for who the 12 days will be a torturous process of ache and bewilderment but also of the new torment that some especially elderly folk in our midst will not be getting the much loved and anticipated week long visit of a

family member with a clatter of grandkids to delight. I was hoping to use this edition to look back on the closing of this decade but this pandemic is distorting time and distance. Imagine the first lighting of our streets' mid-winter darkness took place in December 1842 – with the introduction of gas lights? It took some 7 months at a cost of £1421. This December, thanks to the Town Team, GRD Leader, Credit Union Sponsorship, County Council Grant, Business Contributions and community support; a set of Festive lights that will hopefully see us sparkle for most of the next decade is up. It took some 10 months of planning and €130,000.

The first public planning display of the final designs for the Town Enhancement project took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2011. As we go to print the snag list is still being finalised and the total costs of an original €8 million projects are in arbitration. There must be lessons to be learned from the last decade – if we don't do things differently we will be condemned to the same outcomes.

We managed to celebrate the joy and hope of Christmas without book, bell or candle in centuries past and it did not loosen the bonds of solidarity and fellowship that the Welsh Slave taught us.

This one should not either. Peace and Joy to you all and a Healthy New Year.

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



## Articles and Photos Welcome

**NEXT ISSUE**  
Deadline 13<sup>th</sup> Jan

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

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We have light at the end of the horizon with very positive results on Vaccines. In the interim we still have pain to endure and need to adhere to the recommended guidelines.

We have No School Musicals, No Christmas Plays, No Panto, No Zombie Walk, No Town Hall events, No Ceremony / Festive Gathering to turn on the Christmas lights but there is always next year to look forward to and we will appreciate these events and more all the better in 2021.

Some Businesses have suffered terribly as a result of Covid-19, as have many individuals who have had their daily routine adversely effected. The Community spirit of East Galway / South Roscommon has been very positive over the last nine months but we have a bit more to go and should use whatever opportunity we have over that time to ensure everyone around us is supported and helped in whatever way we can.

We are all dependant on one another and for the foreseeable future we need to shop and spend local as these are the businesses who support local charities and organisations and have kept Ballinasloe life up and running for the past 10 years.

Many family gatherings will be very depleted this year for the festive period, so think of your neighbours and friends and link in more than you have in the past. We all need a bit more interaction with the conversation moving away from Covid-19 / American Elections and Brexit!

The Town Enhancement Scheme has turned out very well and we can be proud of our Public Realm.

Added to that are our new Christmas Lights and Tree which greatly enhance the Christmas ambience.

Merry Christmas to all our readers and wishing you all a happy and prosperous new year in 2021.

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



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## WHAT'S INSIDE

### LOCAL NEWS

- 04 Town Centre Housing
- 05 Pressure Over APTAR

### BUSINESS

- 08 Returnees Establish Company
- 10 GRD Wrap-up
- 11 New Christmas Lights Raffle
- 13 Fuel Merchants 35 Years

### COMMUNITY

- 14 Christmas Messages
- 15 Giving Locally
- 16 Responder Group Defibrillators
- 18 Living Post Pandemic
- 20 Baile an Ri Housing
- 23 Greenway Route Funding
- 24 Waste Facility Battle
- 25 Obituaries
- 28 Schools' Photos
- 30 Crossword
- 31 Out and About
- 32 Walks and Trails
- 34 Accessibility Ballinasloe
- 35 Support for Local Brothers

### 36 Sustainable Living

- 38 Aughrim awaits Bee Gee
- 39 Coming Home for Christmas

### CULTURE

- 40 Eleanor Shanley & John Feeley
- 41 Nollaig na mBan
- 42 Kilconnell Troubadour
- 43 Town Band Bring Cheer
- 44 Library Festival Success

### SPORT

- 45 Camogie Club Review
- 46 Let's Get Active
- 47 Road Runners
- 48 Town Soccer
- 50 St. Grelan's Trip to Tipp
- 52 Double Golf Champions
- 54 Pearses Win Hurling Title

### HERITAGE

- 56 Nephew of Suck Tragedy
- 58 The Names on the Streets
- 60 John Wood & Co.
- 62 Kilclooney Graveyard



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The town centre is poised to see a large unused site on the corner of Dunlo Hill and Dunlo Street, redeveloped by Galway County Council in a bid to tackle to the huge pressures on the local municipal area housing waiting list.



The 1.8 acre site of the iconic Dooley's Bar and Grocery, alongside some 7 residential town houses sweeping up to the Mount, has been targeted by the Council Executive and promoted by local Councillor Dermot Connolly. Members of the Municipal District Area Council have been informed of the progress on this exciting project led by the continuous questioning of the Nutfield based Councillor, over a series of Autumn meetings.

Members were informed officially by Director of Services Mr. Liam Hanrahan that the numbers on the waiting list for the County was 3,400 of which 540 were expressly for the Ballinasloe Electoral Area.

"With the amount of representations that I and our TD Claire Kerrane are getting, I feel these lists could be underestimated somewhat – when we asked the then Housing Officer Michael Owen some 18 months ago we got a figure closer to 800. I think possible these figures are leaving out those persons in support of HAP scheme and indeed the one preceding it – the RAP scheme, as

well as new applications not on the list" stated Cllr. Connolly.

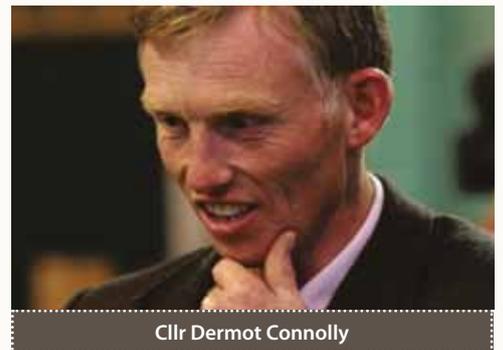
The Councillor has been pushing for a number of years for the Council to use National Funding to acquire unused sites in town centre locations; having seen the results of a pilot scheme in Monaghan County Council presented to the Western Development Commission of which he is a member, some years ago.

"I have been advocating that our Council use our town centres as suitable residential locations, for those in our community who have town centre needs, and may not always have access to a car. We can better serve the needs of all those our area housing lists if look at the possibility of what is under our feet" stated Cllr Dermot.

The Councillors were informed at their Sept meeting that Departmental approval has been received for the purchase of the site at Dunlo Hill and that Preliminary Engineering and Architectural Reports were being prepared.

At the October meeting, arising from Cllr. Dermot Connolly's questions, the Director of Services advised that the Part 8 Planning process for the development at Dunlo Hill would commence when the legal issues have been resolved.

"I am looking forward to moving the Part 8 Process (to allow the Council to fast track the planning and Capital Development) in the new year as soon as we clear the outstanding issues and providing more renewal and hope for people in the new year" stated Cllr. Connolly.



Cllr Dermot Connolly

*It's the season to wish all of our customers a very happy Christmas and New Year. In a year filled with challenges, you've stuck by us. We are sincerely grateful for your continuous support of a local business.*



*We look forward to seeing you and yours again in 2021!*

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There has been vociferous mounting pressure from Government and indeed opposition public representatives over the seeking of replacement industry for the APTAR workforce and plant in the Creagh IDA Business Park.

Since the Summer announcement of impending closure and confirmation in October that all jobs are lost, the Government pledged first support for the plant and then a commitment to spearhead a swift response to find a replacement industry.

Claire Kerrane T.D. was first out of the traps in the Dail in early summer, but more locally Cllr. Evelyn Parsons proposed to Director of Services, Mr. Hanrahan, in September, that he would liaise with the Director of Community, Enterprise and Economic Development and ask that contact be made with both Enterprise Ireland and the I.D.A. with a view to relaying and discussing the impact which the closure has had. All the members of the MDC expressed concern for the employees who have been affected by Aptar's closure and the knock on impact which the closure is having.

Deputy Denis Naughten TD, has recently challenged the Tainiste and Minister for Enterprise Leo Varadkar on the need for him to take personal ownership of actions to secure replacement jobs.

"Since last June I have consistently highlighted the need for a proactive approach to be taken by Government" explained Denis Naughten. "I am disappointed that not only has the Government been unable to save the Aptar operation and protect local jobs, but I fail to see what measures have been taken over the last two months to help secure alternative sources of employment for the 115 workers. I have again pressed the Tánaiste to chair a meeting of all State agencies, as well as the two Local Authorities in Galway and Roscommon, to implement a co-ordinated strategy for Ballinasloe" he added.



Meanwhile Senator Aisling Dolan has confirmed that the Tánaiste will host a video call with relevant State agencies and local authorities focusing on investment and job creation locally. She stated "I have been in constant communication with the Tánaiste and he acknowledged my concerns when speaking in the Dáil this week and confirmed that Ballinasloe is a priority for the Government. I look forward to welcoming him again to town when public health conditions allow."

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar, said: "I know that Aisling has been working hard on this issue over the past few months and engaging with my Department and IDA officials. The job losses are very disappointing but Ballinasloe has a lot to offer and I have asked our agencies, particularly the IDA, to work on creating new employment opportunities in the area."

"With a scale of over 65,000 sq ft for future investment, it is one of few sites of this size in the country and Ballinasloe is the perfect location for FDI investment, off the M6 motorway and only an hour and 20 minutes to Dublin airport. We have skilled graduates and access to third level expertise with Athlone IT as part of a new Technological University (TU) on our doorstep. We are focused on future industries such as life sciences, healthcare and medtech industries" concluded Senator Aisling Dolan.

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# ENTERPRISE COMPANY AWARDED EI GRANT

BY LIAM COSGROVE

Ballinasloe Area Community Development (BACD) Ltd have been awarded €50,000 in funding under the Enterprise Ireland's Enterprise Centres Fund announced at the end of Nov by the Government.

The funding allocated to the not for profit community development company, comprises of match support towards the running costs of Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, and for the support of ongoing and new initiatives being run by the Pulse Club including networking events, training, mentorship and marketing.

"This funding will ensure we can continue to professionally run Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, helping to maintain the 180 plus jobs and 29 firms located here. It will also allow us to expand our initiatives and services provided through the Pulse Club and continue to provide support to all local Ballinasloe Businesses" stated BACD Manager Lyn Donnelly.

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar, announced a total of €8.24 million in grants to 95 enterprise centres throughout the country.

BACD – has been one of the early members and supporters of the National Association of Community Enterprise Centres (NACEC), – sharing learning, innovation and expertise in keeping jobs anchored in local communities.

This funding is the culmination of months of research and

collaboration between NACEC, Enterprise Ireland, the Dept of Enterprise, along with many local key stakeholders including the BACD Board of directors and Pulse Club members.

To find out more details of BACD contact Lyn directly on 0909646516 or log onto thepulseclub.com to see what supports are available for local businesses.



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Not too many know that Tom and Ethel Costelloe have developed a Christmas Tree Farm on their land some nine years ago and are looking forward to supplying local families with the genuine article as part of their festive

decorations this year.

Tom always had an interest in trees and forestry having been a forester with Coillte Teoranta for over 40 years. He worked in locations all over Ireland, returning to Ballinasloe in 1999 and working as a forester on the Sliabh Bloom Mountains in Laois and Offaly. He retired from Coillte in 2015 and managed An Tain Bar in the Square for a number of years. The pub was in stark contrast to the forest life but there was a great buzz to it. "It was great craic and I met some mighty characters in it. If a half pound pike was caught in the Suck at 3 o'clock it would take two men to carry it home by closing time" remarks Tom.

As a forester he has always been drawn to real Christmas trees as they are natural and keep with the spirit of a traditional Christmas. Growing Christmas trees present a different challenge to growing commercial trees as they need a lot more care and attention. On a small family run business here even the two children helps out on the farm.

Principal type are the Nordman Fir Trees, popular for their nice shape, needle retention and lovely fragrance in a home. They also supply Noble Fir which have a slightly different branch structure but are also a very attractive tree with good needle retention and fragrance qualities.

It takes 8 to 10 years to grow a tree and they require a lot of care and attention. Control of vegetation is key as well as basal pruning, shaping, bud picking in May and protection of the soft shoot

growth in early summer from perching birds.

The sustainably managed plantation supports a lot of flora and fauna. Hares, pheasants, badgers, rabbits and song birds of all kinds use the plantation for both food and shelter. Working alongside the bumble bees and lady birds as they control the black aphids on the trees is the closest thing you will get to man and nature working in harmony. Many wild flowers like speedwell, goosegrass, fireweed, and dandelions which are a particular favourite of the honey bees grow throughout the plantation.

Tom is clear on the benefits for the ecosystem. "Unlike artificial trees, real trees can be recycled after use, creating mulch for gardens and landscaping. You can just bring it to the Council Recycling Centre and they will recycle it free of charge. Artificial trees are non-recyclable and non-biodegradable. Real trees plantations prevent global warming by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere" he states.

They can supply trees from 3 ft high up to 11ft, with water containers and stands also, Timber Reindeer, and they can deliver and collect and recycle your tree within a 25km radius of town.

Order your tree online at <http://www.buyirishchristmastrees.com> They also have display and collection points at Dolans Centra on the old Athlone Road and Corrib Oil in Brackernagh. Collection from the farm is by appointment only by calling Tom on 0862532320.

As a special treat to Ballinasloe Life readers who purchase a tree they are giving away a complimentary Rowan (Mountain Ash) sapling and families can help combat global warming by planting it.

"We would like to thank everyone who bought trees from my farm over the years, we really appreciate it. Christmas 2020 is an important milestone and celebrations will be special this year. If you feel like putting a real Christmas tree at the heart of your home we would be delighted to get the opportunity of supplying you with it"enthuses Tom.

*Shop local this Christmas*

## The Front Room is now Live

The Front Room has launched its brand new website and is fully stocked with Christmas gifting ideas. For all your skincare and beauty gifting this Christmas you can shop with us online at [www.thefrontroom.ie](http://www.thefrontroom.ie) and also on our online shop at [shopballinasloe.ie](http://shopballinasloe.ie). We have delivery and click and collect options for all items. As always vouchers are available and orders can be tailored to suit the individual and made bespoke by contacting us at the salon.

Appointments as usual can be made by phone or by downloading our salon app - **The Front Room Ballinasloe** - from your app store.

We would like to thank everyone for their continued support through this second lockdown and we look forward to seeing all our lovely clients for the festive season.

Andrea & Breda



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# RETURNEES ESTABLISH CO. SERVING THE GULF

BY COLM CROFFY

The Enterprise Centre welcomed another tenant and start up when a local man and his wife established a new firm, servicing clients from the part of the world where they previously worked, fell in love and married!

Relocating from the Middle East to Ballinasloe in August 2020, took a few months to actually get back, due to airport closures in Oman, but David Gallagher, his wife Salha Al Sabahi and their two children: Noorah aged 8 and Adam aged 5 managed to settle in .

David completed his Leaving Cert at St Michael's Vocational School, worked for a few Years in Square D before studying in Civil Engineering in Athlone IT, progressing to an Honours Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Edinburgh.

He began his Engineering career in Galway with Tobin Consulting Engineers and then moved to the Middle East in 2007, working on some amazing mega projects throughout the Arabian Gulf. In 2011 he became a Chartered Engineer of Engineer's Ireland which saw his career move towards the Project Management aspects of Construction.

His wife Salha - from Muscat, Oman, attended schools in Malaysia, Sudan, Bahrain and Oman, as well as the city of St Louis in Missouri, USA for her 3rd level education in Business Administration.

She has previously worked in the Aviation industry, Event Management, Tourism Development and Property sectors in Kuwait and Oman and is currently completing a degree in Marketing.

They found setting up their own company a lot easier than expected- "our first Client is located in Dubai; my previous employer was helpful; so we are currently providing support from Ireland on a large project, which I have been involved in since 2016", states David.

The Project is in the heart of Dubai Marina, UAE, where Gallagher PM is providing Contract Management support to a high rise (59 storey) mixed use development, comprising of a Hotel, 362 Residential Apartments, Retail Units and a Yacht Club.

At Gallagher PM they offer tailored solutions for individual client requirements for all stages of the Construction cycle (Pre and Post Contract).

"The Enterprise Centre (BEC) is a 'one stop' shop, fully furnished offices, with high speed Internet. I was providing a service to our Client in Dubai within 10 minutes of walking into my new office – that's the quality of the resources this location provides" explains David.

Advantages of Ballinasloe as a business start-up are easily identifiable it's the other reasons that he and his wife found very attractive

"To find a wide range of school options, sporting facilities, great golf course, soccer club, GAA clubs, snooker club etc, other activities for children, e.g. Irish dancing, Galway Music Hub and the town library, coupled with great businesses within the town, to name a few...Gullane's Hotel for Sunday carvery, Joes bar for live sports, Salmons Department Store, Supermacs ! plus many more... is a huge plus" notes David.

Once they have a firm foundation, they would like to build the size of our Company but know it's not going to be easy for the next 12 to 24 months.

When asked for advice for start-ups, it boils down to a few core principles for them. "Do not rush, do your Market research – not all from online, assess all known risks and please speak to experienced professionals" are David's Top tips.

They are indeed grateful to Lyn Donnelly, James Coyle, Principal of Coyle & Company (Chartered Accountants); Gemma Costello, Bank Manager Galway South & East, Bank of Ireland

It's best during COVID to contact by phone; 085 8036652 or email david@GallagherPM.com Website: www.GallagherPM.com is currently under construction and should be live by early 2021.



David and Salaha Gallagher - The Team behind Gallagher Project Management



One of their current projects on level 41 of 49 - VIDA Hotel and Residencies , Dubai

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# VOUCHER IDEAL FOR CHRISTMAS

BY LIAM COSGROVE

The NEW 'Town Voucher Ballinasloe' makes the ideal gift this Christmas. The vouchers can be used in all participating businesses and are not limited to any one store or business – giving shoppers greater choice when shopping throughout the town. To date over €15,000 worth of vouchers has been purchased since launching three weeks ago.

Currently available through Salmons Department Store, Dolans Centra and [www.ShopBallinasloe.ie](http://www.ShopBallinasloe.ie). The vouchers come in denominations of €10, €20 and €50. They are available all year round, making them the ideal gift option for any occasion as well as ideal prizes for Raffles, Draws, Golf Classics and Table Quiz's.

Local employers who operate performance related payment and bonuses for their staff should consider gifting them Town Vouchers. Under the Small Benefits Exemptions Scheme, employers can reward employees up to €500 in Town Vouchers, completely tax-free and saving them and their employees money.

Reaction has been very positive from business owners and service providers. "I'm thrilled with the town voucher incentive and the support from the community. ShopBallinasloe has enabled me to keep my business open even behind closed doors. The team have been a great support since signing up last April" states Kathleen Naughton – Kathleen's Fashions.

"We've seen a huge interest in store already – with many customers enquiring about the new vouchers when purchasing bikes, helmets and accessories. We are delighted to be part of the initiative and the ShopBallinasloe team are incredibly supportive – making it easy and hassle free for us retailers to promote our business" explains Barry Taylor – Barry's Cycles.

Shopping local and supporting local businesses and jobs has never been more important. With a clear and simple message to 'buy local', ensuring the town survives. By choosing these vouchers everyone is making a difference that benefits the community!



## NEW TELE-CONFERRING FOR CENTRE

New tele-conferencing equipment has recently just been installed in BEC, consisting of a state of the art camera and microphone system along with large screen TV and laptop, allowing multiple users in the one location video or tele conference.

The new equipment allows multiple users in one location host a meeting and allow other users to dial in, with the existing and foreseeable COVID restrictions it allows businesses and community groups carry on with their day to day activities during the restrictions-ideal for AGMS!

The equipment is portable so can be utilized in either the board room, which can hold up to 8 persons, or the training room which can accommodate up to 20 persons, both which are available to rent on an hourly or daily basis.

Funding was received from the Hub Outreach Scheme which was coordinated by the Western Development Commission & the Atlantic Economic Corridor Enterprise Hubs Network

"The equipment has already proved invaluable, especially though the most recent lockdown measures, it has allowed BACD Ltd to continue with their monthly board meetings and has helped facilitate a number of the popular Pulse Club webinars too" commented the BEC manager, Lyn Donnelly.

Both the training Room and board room are available to rent, with or without the equipment, from €15 per half day (4 hours). Contact Lyn in BEC on 0909646516 or email [info@ballinalsoeneterpirsecentre.ie](mailto:info@ballinalsoeneterpirsecentre.ie) for further information.



Eimear Loughnane & Co.  
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**Principal: Eimear Loughnane B.A., L.L.B.**  
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**Christmas  
Greetings and  
a Happy and  
Healthy 2021**



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Following the restrictions introduced last Spring to control the spread of the COVID-19, the team at Galway Rural Development (GRD) have had to make some difficult decisions in relation to their work programme. With 500 employees-50 full-time, GRD is the county's largest local development company and it administers SICAP, LEADER, and the Rural Social Schemes (RSS) and TÚS Programmes amongst others.

Seeking to adapt quickly to the pandemic, the organisation's focus immediately changed to:

- Pinpointing and assisting isolated and vulnerable persons,
- Distributing public health information through their network of offices and contacts, and
- Assisting in the preparation of Social Welfare forms – a major demand from late March.

Almost €100k in grants were disbursed from April, with the majority being targeted to the provision of food, care packs,

and PPE equipment to those local organisations most in need. Other changes saw the redeployment of SICAP staff to both Food Cloud in Oranmore and to 'contact tracing' teams; while Tús, RSS and CE staff and participants took to-and remain at-the front-line' in terms of grocery and medication delivery, etc.

Individual training provided through SICAP continued through the pandemic – albeit focused on-line; while

individual grants of up to €500 were provided to dozens of individual applicants, right across the county. The average grant was circa €350 and the range of courses supported by GRD included those in social care, special needs training, and business courses; as well as chainsaw, forklift, and health & safety courses.

More recently, in response to the pressures and the stresses that people are experiencing, GRD has been distributing information booklets on the supports and services that promote positive mental health in the county. The booklet is available on GRD's website as a download, or as a handy A5 size which can be posted out to all those interested. Email [info@grd.ie](mailto:info@grd.ie) or ring 087 9170904 if you would like a copy.

Finally, as we look ahead to a post-pandemic future, fresh off the press is a new booklet from GRD with tips for all those seeking employment. The employment guide is again available for download on the GRD website under 'Resource Booklets and Case Studies', or you can contact Donna on 087 2578192 or [dgleeson@grd.ie](mailto:dgleeson@grd.ie) for a pdf copy.



Don't forget to enter our new **CROSSWORD** page 30 and **WIN** a **Cooper Hurling Helmet**

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The arrival of the new streets, new lamps and new electrical installations meant the town streetscape could not longer cope with the old non environmentally friendly festoons.

The Town Team, under the umbrella of the BACD Ltd., have been meeting and planning since February to get a new set of sustainable friendly lights designed, tendered and erected in time for Christmas and New Year.

The total new set purchased, insurance and installation of the set will come to about €130,000. Funding was applied for and gratefully received from Galway Rural Development LEADER, Galway County Council, Ballinasloe Credit Union.

Liam and Matt Kenny got the tender for erection and have been busy in terrible weather installing. No Lighting up public ceremony will happen for all the right reasons.

James Burke the Lights Subscription Co-ordinator, for some 23 seasons, has been calling on doors to collect individual business contributions and to encourage them when open to offer Raffle tickets to their customers.

The community contribution to the annual cost of these lights is being raised by way of a Monster Raffle, where tickets priced €5 each or 3 for €10, are available from most outlets and of course can be bought on line through the ShopBallinasloe.ie.

The 10 winners will be drawn at the Festive Tree, live on Fbook on Dec 19th and again the following evening on the 20th. The 10 winners will pull for lucky dip to see who will receive the 10 wonderful prizes sponsored by businesses in the locality.

Some 35% of the fundraising target has been met as we go to print and the team are encouraging everyone and every organisation to promote the sales in the next few weeks.

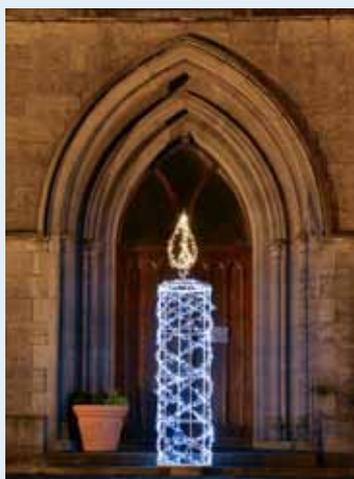
Town Team Co-ordinator Anita Killeen encouraged and thanked

all. "We have had a bruising COVID year but we have been really encouraged by our business community rallying to support the draw with their fabulous prizes worth in excess of €5,000, so let everyone try and do their bit by at least every house buying one ticket" enthuses Anita.

A full financial summary report including the winners and subscribers as well as cost headings will be published in Life in the New Year.

#### PRIZES:

- 3 day family Break, Shearwater Hotel
- Dubarry Tweed Jacket and Galway Jacket RRP €900
- 500 ltrs Home Heating Oil from Corrib Oil
- €500 SO Hotel Group Voucher (Pat & Una McDonagh)
- €500 Utah Department Store Voucher
- €250 Dillons Tyres Voucher
- 500 ltrs Home Heating Oil from Garbally Oil
- €250 Supervalu Voucher
- €1000 Shop Ballinasloe Voucher
- €250 Hogartys Flooring & DIY Voucher



## BALLINASLOE COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

During the pandemic Frank is meeting clients in his consultation room in Church Hill through a perspex screen. He can also meet by Zoom or phone if clients prefer.



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## COUNTRY MARKET PLANS BUSY FESTIVE RUN IN BY LIAM COSGROVE

The Country Market open on Fridays in the Town Hall Theatre, 9am to 1pm, is looking forward to a busy few weeks trading to Christmas and have planned an extra morning trading on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> December, which will be their last one of the year.

Typical weekly offerings include organic vegetables, free range eggs, home baking, wide range crafts and knitwear – all in a heavily regulated COVID-19 socially distant environment.

For December these are supplemented with locally produced and crafted Jewellery, Bookmarks, Picture frames, Stocking fillers, Christmas decorations and a variety of Xmas knitwear, baking and indeed some festive plants.

The group have no more pitch space left and can't accommodate any other stall holders but will be reviewing their pitches in January



– anyone wishing to join the market should contact Chairman

Martin Deeley 0879591548.

“We'd like to thank all our customers, old and new, for continuing to support us, especially during this pandemic year and if you are worried about a unique or bespoke gift for a loved one or friend who might just have everything – then please give us a visit – you'd be pleasantly surprised with the range of quality items that we are now providing” states Martin.

The raffle for Christmas hampers, stuffed with market goodies, have tickets for €2 or 3 for €5, with the proceeds going towards the Town Hall Theatre.

The Market will reopen after the holiday break on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January.

## MODERN MEDIA AND FLETCHERS WEATHERING C-19

Covid 19 has changed many aspects of our lives, none more than live music events across Ireland and indeed mainland Europe. Sean Fletcher and Modern Media have been busy rescheduling, London, Brighton and Spanish events to 2021 and also now booking season 2022.

This July's sell out gigs for Nancy and the Dolls and Bootleg Blondie in Brighton, were postponed to July 2021, London dates to Nov. 2021 and Valencia, Spain to Oct 2021. With all fans keeping tickets for 2021 the next few years look very positive for the live music scene once concerts are safe to proceed.

Sean Fletcher and Modern Media employ reps in London, Brighton and Valencia and since 2009 all London shows have been selling out. Ex Sex Pistol Glen Matlock and Blondies Clem Burke, are just a few of the new acts selected in 2021 and 2022.

Sean's family are now also involved in the growing business with son Ian (promoting events from L.A.) and daughters Ciara and Sarah promoting from Ireland. Sean has also employed a



Sean Fletcher and Blondies Drummer Clem Burke at 100 Club London November 2019.



Sean Fletcher and Modern Media's Spanish event rep and translator Sabrina Walton at the Peter Rock Music venue Valencia Spain Oct 2019.

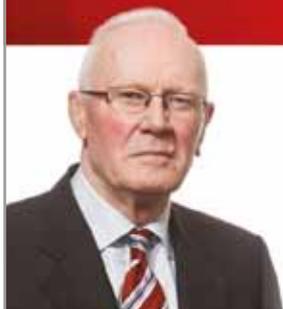
Tickets for all Modern media events available from Ticketmaster UK and Universe Spain.

Spanish Rep and Translator to help with the Spanish design and countries' legal requirements.

As Fletchers Expert Electrical being exceptionally busy thanks to fantastic local support and a great young vibrant sales team, proprietor Sean can now devote more time to Modern Media's overseas business for 2021 and 2022.

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## FUEL MERCHANTS 35 YEARS IN HOBSON'S LANE

Thirty-five years ago, the late Peter Joe Donohue set up a business to supply fuel, from its base in Hobson's Lane, to the local community. Now it is run by Peter Madden, a Fohenagh man, who first started there as an 11-year-old. Madden Fuels continue to supply homes and businesses in the town and surrounding hinterland with a range of quality solid fuels and bottled gas.

Peter's father, Anthony, managed the business for years for the late Peter Joe Donohue, beginning back in the middle 1980's. Anthony worked alongside the late Pat Corbett, who was employed previously by Grenhams.

Peter, who still lives in Fohenagh with his wife Philomena, daughters Anna and Maria and son Conor, began with his Dad, in Hobson's Lane since he was 11, with summer jobs. Along with other part time jobs it provided income through school and indeed college.

Prior to taking over the business from Donohues in 2011 he worked in I.T. until he was made redundant during the crash 2008/09. "I always wanted to run my own business and when the opportunity arose I took it. So with Dad alongside, we took it on and we will hopefully be celebrating 10 years as Peter Madden Fuels in May '21".

Solid Fuels ie Coal, Smokeless Coal, Briquettes and bottled butane and propane gas are the mainstay products for 6 days a week with a daily delivery service. They also carry a range of quality timber, wood briquettes, gas fittings and mobile heaters, as well as pet food and general household goods in store.

Recently, Madden Fuels became Regional Agents for Irish Oxygen Industrial and Welding products, which allows them supply a range of gases for the engineering and metal fabrication sector - treatment, welding and cutting gases, i.e Oxygen, Acetylene, WeldShield and Argon.



Based in Cork, since 1949 when the Constant family set up the business to service the Steel & Motor industries, Irish Oxygen has developed a reputation second to none, producing and distributing industrial gases for industry, laboratories, agriculture, education and DIY users. It promises to be an exciting partnership going forward for Madden Fuels.

Observing trends in the Lockdowns, Peter has seen lots of home delivery and shopping over the phone, more electronic payments. "People did panic to begin with but it has evened out as customers are more assured about supply and their needs" notes Peter.

"More people are turning to smokeless fuel as they are learning the benefits to both their pocket and the environment. There is a lot of new, more efficient appliances in use and on the market nowadays, a far cry from the Stanley 8 or the Aga. Come in and chat us. Don't think you have to bulk buy to save. Sample and try out different products and combinations to find what suits you and your appliance or house best" advises Peter.

Peter, Pat, his wife Philomena and dad Anthony, who is being Covid conscious in present times but still active in the background, are all on hand to assist.

Store open Monday to Friday 10 to 6 and Saturday 10 to 5. Phone 090964368 or 086 8629387.

**BY COLM CROFFY**



## COUCH TO WILD ATLANTIC WAY



Employees from Ballinasloe-based medical devices company Surmodics took part in Croí's virtual Couch to Wild Atlantic Way Challenge, raising over €8,300 in aid of the Heart and Stroke Charity. The virtual challenge was a new event created by Croí and sponsored by Laya Healthcare. With 58 people taking part across six teams, the Surmodics teams walked a total of 10,000 miles over a six-week period throughout the summer. The teams tracked their progress through an interactive map, which moved them along the Wild Atlantic Coast from Donegal to Clare.

Surmodics generously matched funds raised by the teams, with an additional donation of €1,830, which represented €1 per km of the route from Donegal to Clare. "As one of our strongest corporate partners, it was a great opportunity for Croí to connect with the Surmodics staff on our first ever virtual event. We were overwhelmed by the show of support from the team at Surmodics, raising over €8,300 for Croí" said Christine Flanagan, Director of Fundraising at Croí.

Surmodics is a great supporter of Croí's work, having committed a significant contribution over five years to Croí's out-of-hospital stroke support programme. People suffering from cardiovascular

disease are most at risk if affected by COVID-19. Support from events such as the Couch to Wild Atlantic Way Challenge will help Croí continue to deliver their lifesaving programmes, including Heartlink West, a free call community telephone helpline operated by Croí's nurse specialists. Learn more at [www.croi.ie](http://www.croi.ie).



Backrow (L to R): Ryan Toner, Tom Greaney, Damien Kilcommons  
Middle Row (L to R): Derek Doolin and Gary Forde  
Front Row (L to R): Teresa Murray and Celine Mollaghan



**Christmas 2019 seems worlds apart from the Christmas that we are facing into this year, with all the anxiety, uncertainty and suffering which continue to accompany the Covid 19 pandemic. Yet something so remarkable and unexpected happened in Ballinasloe last Christmas, that it continues to give meaning to our current Christmas experience in these difficult times.**

On a bitterly cold night late last December, with an icy wind and torrential downpours battering the town, a young Irish comedian called Francis Cronin slept out on the steps of St John's Church. It was part of his campaign to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people in Ireland; by walking from Galway to Dublin on the week before Christmas, sleeping rough each night and performing stand-up comedy gigs en route.

Watching that brave young man lie down to sleep on the steps of the church, exhausted from his arduous journey and bracing himself against the cold, was a life-changing experience for those of us who were privileged to see it. That night, Christmas was stabled on the steps of St John's Church. Francis Cronin chose to make himself

utterly vulnerable for the sake of the most vulnerable people in our society. In doing so, his compassionate gesture struck to the very heart of the Christmas message. The only way in which God could express the depth of his love for humanity, was to send his only Son to be share in our vulnerability and suffering. That's why the baby Jesus started his life sleeping rough and fleeing for his life

as a refugee. That's why, as a young man, Jesus allowed himself to suffer agony and death on the cross, in solidarity with all who suffer.

As part of this year's plans to light up Ballinasloe for Christmas, a giant candle illumination will be placed on the steps of St John's Church, where Francis Cronin lay this time last year. In Christmas 2020 may it be a sign, for all of us, of God's enduring love in the middle of our current hardship. May the light of Christ bring renewed hope to us all this Christmas.



December 2019 (courtesy of Gerry Strange) of comedian Francis Cronin sleeping rough on the steps of St John's Church. Included in the photo, from left to right, are Reverend John Godfrey, Francis Cronin, Kevin Cunniffe and Catherine Gibbons.

## FR. GARVEY'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



I thank Ballinasloe Life team, who make it possible to reach out to you at this time when so much of what we had taken for granted has now been taken away from us for an indefinite period of time, due to this ongoing pandemic. As I write, it's just short of six weeks to the Feast of Christmas and the one thing we can be sure about is that our celebrations this year will be much quieter and more low-key. We await direction from the Medical

experts and Policy makers as to what will be permissible in relation to Ceremonies.

I remember hearing an interview some years ago on radio at a time when flights were cancelled and some families had to abandon planned holidays. The interviewer was zoning in on the disappointment and the wasted effort of getting everything ready for this trip. But the woman being interviewed also spoke about how, as a family, they had enjoyed the time and effort they had put into preparing for this trip and that this had value in itself.

Some preparation for Christmas is encouraged and in this regard I recommend taking a bit of time each day to slow down and listen to your body breathing and your heart beating and to offer a short prayer of gratitude for being alive and for all that we

still enjoy and have been given. Better still is to do this as a family.

If you have internet access one could go to Today's Good News (a website by Fr Donagh O'Shea) and read the Gospel reading assigned for that day, with his thoughts on same. To read these reflections slowly, perhaps a few times will repay the effort. Similar websites include Today is my gift to You and Sacred Space with the Jesuits.

Once a British journalist visited Kolkata, India to see the works of the Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Mother Teresa. He went to their old-age house at Kali-ghat Temple and watched an attractive young Nun dressing the wounds on a man with gangrene in his leg. The journalist was appalled by the very sight of the wound, but at the same time he was full of admiration for the young nun, who seemed to show no disgust as she was cleaning the suppurating wound. "I wouldn't do that for £1,000" said the journalist. "Neither would I" said the Nun, "I do it for love." Fr. Tony (<http://frtonyshomilies.com/>)

I hope you enjoy this time of preparation in the lead into Christmas.

(Masses from St Michael's Church can be joined at [www.churchservicestv/ballinasloe](http://www.churchservicestv/ballinasloe) Peace and prayers, Fr John Garvey.

## 3K A DAY TO PRAY

Ever since October 8th, churches of all traditions have been closed for public worship, as part of the government's Covid-19 restrictions. But the clergy in Aghrim have been keen to remind people that their parishes are still running and their churches are still active.

That's why Reverend John Godfrey (the Church of Ireland Rector of the Aghrim & Creagh Parish Unions) and Father Gerard Geraghty (the Roman Catholic Parish Priest of Aghrim & Kilconnell Parish) teamed up to run 3 kilometres a day to pray for their parishes, throughout Level 3. When the country moved to Level 5 restrictions on October 22nd, they stepped up a gear too and have been running 5 kilometres daily ever since.

"We learned during the first lockdown just how important it is to look after our mental, physical and spiritual health," explained Fr Gerard Geraghty. "So we want local people to join us in doing some form of physical activity every day until the churches open again."

"It doesn't matter if you run, walk, cycle, scooter or skip," added Reverend John Godfrey, "What matters is the spiritual discipline of doing this every day for your local church. That's why we are publishing prayer-postcards every day, to help you on your prayer-journey."

"By the time our churches open again, we want them to be as healthy as they can; spiritually, mentally and financially," said Fr Gerard. "Just like other charities, church finances have been hit hard by the pandemic" added

Reverend John. "We are asking people to sponsor the '3K a Day to Pray' appeal, as a way of making sure that their local churches have the finances to keep running properly."

For daily prayer-postcards, or to donate, search on [gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com) for '3K a Day to Pray - Aghrim & Creagh Parish Unions' or '3K a Day to Pray - Aghrim & Kilconnell RC Parish'.

This is the latest ecumenical collaboration between the Aghrim churches in recent years. During renovations to St Catherine's Church in 2016 and 2017, Holy Trinity Church hosted weekly masses for their neighbouring congregation. In June 2019 the two clergy jointly led community celebrations for the 200th anniversary of Holy Trinity Church. Earlier this year, the parishes shared a joint Lenten Bible Study course called 'Caring for the Garden of the Earth.' They are currently working together on plans for the Aghrim Climate Action Park, a community ecological project on church lands.

For more details contact: Rev. John Godfrey, the Rectory, Aghrim, Ballinasloe, Co Galway Tel: 0879008085 / Email: [reverendjohngodfrey@gmail.com](mailto:reverendjohngodfrey@gmail.com) YouTube: Aghrim and Creagh Parish or Fr. Gerard Geraghty, Parochial House, Aghrim, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway Tel: 0879673724 / Email: [aghrimkilconnell@clonfertdiocese.ie](mailto:aghrimkilconnell@clonfertdiocese.ie) YouTube: St Catherine's Church Aghrim

Traditionally a time when Raffles, Craft Fairs, Concerts, Collections, Walks, Swims and indeed events are held in abundance to raise funds for much needed people in distress and local causes but in the COVID 19 reality the menu of options has limited hugely but not the ASK.

This year you will have to make it your business to seek out and support the charity or cause you wish to support but some groups who undertake a vast amount of good work locally ought to be considered.

**The Saint Vincent de Paul Branch** deliver fuel to over 200 households every winter – a Christmas Run and a New Year top up to help those stretched to stay warm.

200 Oil deliveries: twice is a big ask and this year again they will be assisting many families and households with bills, groceries and some Santa essentials on the build-up. With no church gate collections or other events they are relying on the goodwill of the area to assist with MONETARY only donations at this time.

People can visit the store at 1 Jubilee Street, H53 X529 and drop in donations, during normal hours when restrictions ease - Monday - Friday: 11am-4pm, Saturday: 11am-2pm or Tel: 090 9645707. Email: ballinasloesvp@eircom.net or if you wish to lodge a sum use the AIB Dunlo St. IBAN IE83AIBK93704530756183 BIC AIBKIE2D

**The East Galway and Midlands Cancer Centre** are moving it to a Virtual Christmas Fair!

They are very grateful to those who have made items to be sold, but stock is limited.

Over the next few weeks, they will upload pictures of items available to purchase. You can message them if you wish to buy and you can pick up at the centre (arranged beforehand) or they can arrange postage (at a little extra cost).

A range of Chutneys, Baked Goods, Christmas Decorations, Handmade Earrings and jewellery, Notebooks with beautiful handmade covers, Wooden Christmas Candle Holders, as well as their ever popular Christmas cards designed by the Art Group at the centre.

**The Ballinasloe Christmas Appeal** run by Simon Ballinasloe and the Social Services are seeking non perishable items that can made

up into hampers. Items can be left to Stronges Photography or Room 324 at the Enterprise Centre up until the 18th of Dec. People can contact Bernie Woods 087 2300245, Mary Creaven 087 6488075 or Noreen Kenny 087 9732378 for more details.

Last year was the third annual Christmas Jumper day fundraiser in Ballinasloe. Thanks to the support of schools, shops businesses and the general public this annual event has always been a success supporting The Simon Community, Pieta House and East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre, Brackernagh, Ballinasloe.

Due to the huge uncertainty on restrictions they have been advised not to hold the fundraiser this year. They look forward to you joining them for the jumper day fundraiser in 2021.



New Ambassador for Community Hearts (which is a support group for local Charities) GERRY DEVLIN receiving a cheque for the Charity of his choice from Maureen Cahalan Community Hearts Secretary. Gerry has planned two or three events for 2021 which will be different and exciting.



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## RESPONDER GROUP ADD



Aidan and Ana Victoria Curley, Tom & Catherine Murray with the new AED outside Murray's house in Cullagh



Maeve Larkin, Denise Treacy, Helen Kelly, Jean Broderick, Marie Cunningham, Phil Horan, Mary Dillon, and Cormac Nott with the new AED outside Brothers of Charity Services, Deerpark Centre, Cleaghmore

The Creagh/Ballinasloe First Responder Group continues to expand their range of equipment in the locality with the installation of a number of additional AEDs in the community. The Group now have 15 AEDs accessible 24/7 to the public, housed in bright yellow cabinets.

Timely CPR and defibrillation with an AED greatly increase survival rates following cardiac arrest. In the event of a cardiac arrest, an emergency call to 112 or 999 should be made immediately. The caller will be advised on the nearest location of an AED and the code to open the AED box. They will also be instructed on how to deliver CPR until first responders or paramedics arrive.

Creagh/ Ballinasloe CFR Group have 40 members trained and available to respond to calls.

The new AED locations are:

- **Derrymullen:** at entrance to Willow Park.
- **Cleaghmore:** Front porch of the Brothers of Charity Deerpark Centre
- **Rugby Club, Kellysgrove:** The Rugby club kindly agreed to place their AED in an accessible box on the outside of the clubhouse for public use.
- **Nutfield Cross:** At junction on Dermot Connolly's wall.
- **Cullagh:** on external boundary wall of home of Thomas and Catherine Murray.

The group would like to acknowledge Signs and Systems, Brothers of Charity, Ballinasloe Rugby Club, Dermot Connolly and Thomas

and Catherine Murray for allowing them to place the equipment at their locations and for providing electricity supplies for the AED boxes.

"All of us in the group would also like to thank Ballinasloe Credit Union, Tesco Staff, Ballinasloe and Harney Locksmiths, Athlone for their generous contributions to paying for these installations" stated Helen Harney Group Co – Ordinator.

The group is not able to respond to emergency calls at present due to HSE Covid 19 restrictions but all equipment is available for public use. Creagh/Ballinasloe CFR Group hopes to be allowed to return to active service shortly and will be offering training in CPR and AED use to anyone interested in joining.

For further information see; [www.facebook.com/Creagh.Ballinasloe.cfr.group](http://www.facebook.com/Creagh.Ballinasloe.cfr.group) or phone Helen, Group Coordinator at 0878205840.



Aidan Curley, Tom Murray, Veronica Connolly, Ailbhe & Fiadh Ni Chonghaile, Catherine Murray, Daithi Hynes and Ana Victoria Curley with the new AED at Nutfield Cross

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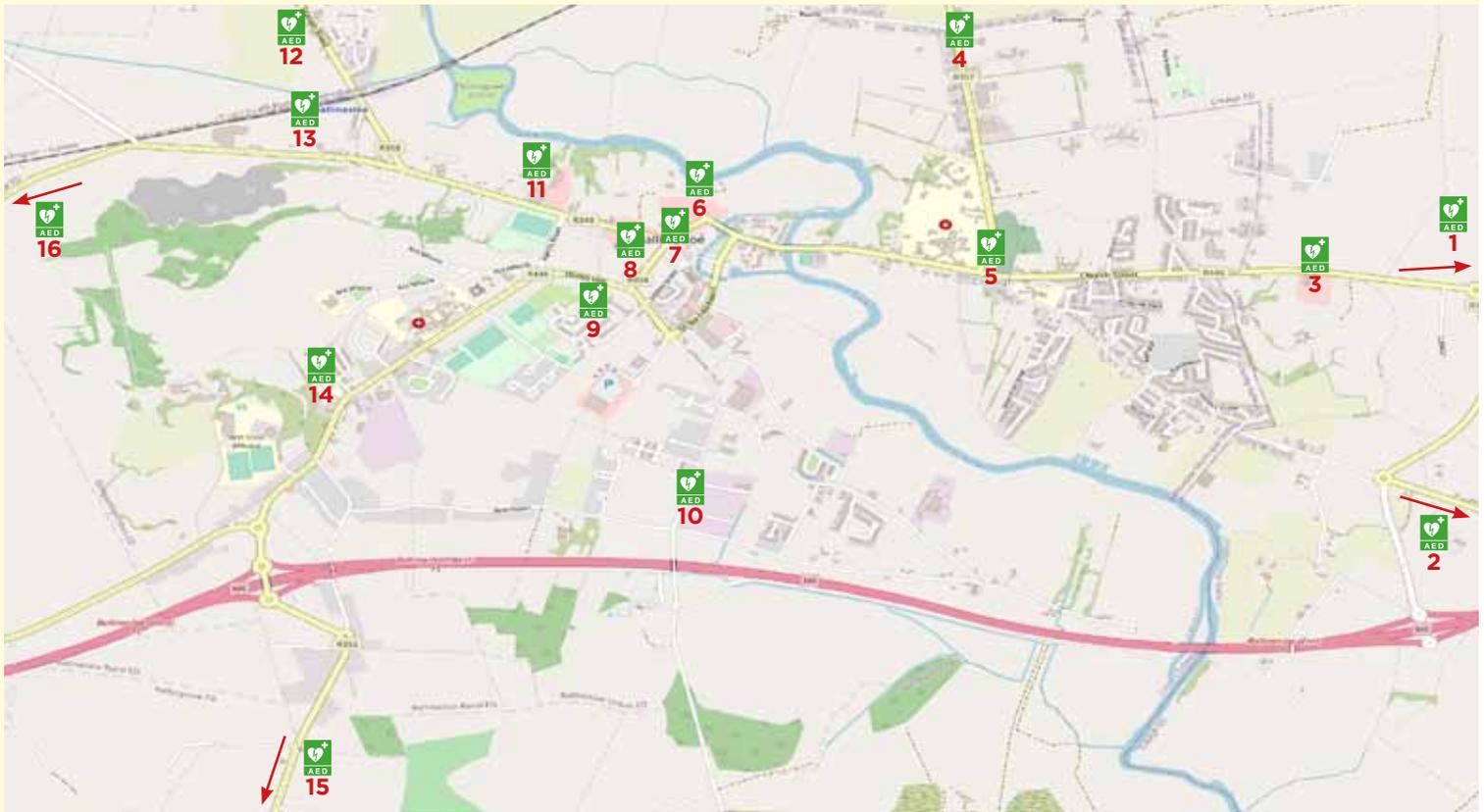
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| 2. Cullighmore, Shannonbridge Road. H53 F297     | 11. Barrett's of Ballinasloe, Sarsfield Road. H53 N7X3     |
| 3. Centra - Dolan's Service Station. H53 Y5D0    | 12. Ballinasloe Business Park, Derrymullan. H53 V4Y9       |
| 4. Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre. H53 F611       | 13. Brothers of Charity, Cleaghmore. H53 Y5R5              |
| 5. Countryman Inn, Creagh. H53 P282              | 14. East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre. H53 P8H0 |
| 6. Bank of Ireland, Main Street. H53 A9N9        | 15. Ballinasloe Rugby Club, Kellysgrove, H53 F446          |
| 7. Post Office, St Michael Square. H53 AR25      | 16. Nutfield Cross. H53 KF74                               |
| 8. Garda Station, Dunlo Street. H53 CK30         |  |
| 9. 25 Hymany Park. H53 TW13                      |  |

Creagh/Ballinasloe CFR Group Sponsored by:



## CAHALAN JEWELLERS



In 1941 The Jewellery Trade met in the UK and planned for its reconstruction for getting back to business after the war.

Well in 2020 are Retailers doing the same? "I think we are all doing more but in a much different way owing to the Covid-19 war. We are more aware and there is more technology to help us. We are able to meet on Zoom, through this magazine Ballinasloe Life, through Shop Ballinasloe i.e., and of course through and with the help of Lyn at BACD" enthuses Maureen.

At Cahalan Jewellers they are taking every advantage on all platforms and offering many new products i.e. Smart Life watches as well as new collections in Jewellery, Giftware and Trophies. This year they are supporting Irish Suppliers and Manufacturers and sticking strictly to buying local where possible.

They are very lucky that we are in a position to supply anything in all our categories their customers require. As a result of adding some more Goldsmiths to their team they are able to supply bespoke items at better price points. They can boast of being able to be the BEST there is at Jewellery Repairs be they modern or antique pieces, whilst also remodelling and

upskilling old jewellery to give it a new look as required.

They still have their popular pay plan in operation while they still strive for perfection and have time for their clients.

"All of us wish thank every Customer for your support during 2020 which is greatly appreciated and noted. It was a difficult year and totally different for Cahalan Jewellers as it was for all in Business. We wish you a pleasant Christmas and a better 2021. Be well, Be safe" states Maureen and team.

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# Cahalan JEWELLERS

The son of Peter and Margaret Kelly from Brackernagh, Cathal moved to Wuxi, China, in November 2017 to teach. Having submitted an article in our March edition detailing his experiences in the first country to go into complete lockdown, he updates us with his present situation.

Wuxi came out of lockdown in March and thankfully no new cases



arose in my city since then. Locals here and across China took the lockdown extremely seriously during the entire month of February. Practically zero movement and deserted streets curtailed the spread.

It's worth noting that the people took this policy upon themselves. No police or army stood present on the streets at any time to enforce shutdown. Communities simply regulated themselves as people only journeyed out in small numbers for essentials before returning directly home. I only had one minor incident when a local resident, unaware I lived in the community, prohibited me from entering the complex. The episode was all very cordial and light and once a security guard recognized me, he instructed the person to let me enter.

During that time I had my friends here but we could only communicate online and as I live alone, the feeling of confinement created a sense of isolation. Working from home is also not for me and I found this period extremely frustrating. However I was fortunate that my company EF moved all teachers on line and we still received a full wage. I heard confirmed stories of other training centres slashing teachers wages by over sixty per cent.

In hindsight I can say that from chatting with home and reading world news, the general feeling in February appeared to be that this was just a Chinese problem for China.

March arrived and slowly businesses reopened with restricted hours or numbers of patrons allowed to enter. China is a high tech country where your mobile phone is used for everything from hopping on a bus, paying for goods, utilities or settling your restaurant bill.

A special QR code was issued whereby once you registered this would give you a "green light" to allow you to move within the city. All businesses required you to sign your name, provide your phone number, take a temperature check and scan your code. The logic being that should a case emerge, authorities could quickly localize the area, contact those who were present in an effort to limit any further spread.

This approach seems highly effective. China enjoyed a 56 day clean run. However on October 12th a case emerged in Qingdao,

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north east of China, resulting in a total number of 19 patients with thankfully no fatalities. Due to the swift action, as of November 12th the number of cases has dropped back to zero. Beijing and Shanghai have also detected the virus and acted accordingly. Ironically the majority of new cases are brought in from people returning to China, so essentially, the virus is doing the rounds!

In mid-March our centre reopened much to my relief. Class sizes were restricted and only the larger rooms utilized. Social distancing was observed as best as possible and people wore masks. Thankfully now in November the centre is one hundred percent back to normal.

In June, I travelled to Shanghai with some friends for a small Fleadh Cheoil. Travelling through the train station was the equivalent of a science fiction movie scene. Hoards of workers in white overalls with temperature machines placed to scan your body which showed up on a large TV screen followed by temperature check upon temperature check. Thankfully our group passed through easily and I was delighted that my local friends enjoyed the music as they had never heard Irish music before. However I've decided to stay put for the winter. It's too much hassle to move between cities. Some hotels have even refused to accept foreign guests, even foreigners who have not left China during the last year.

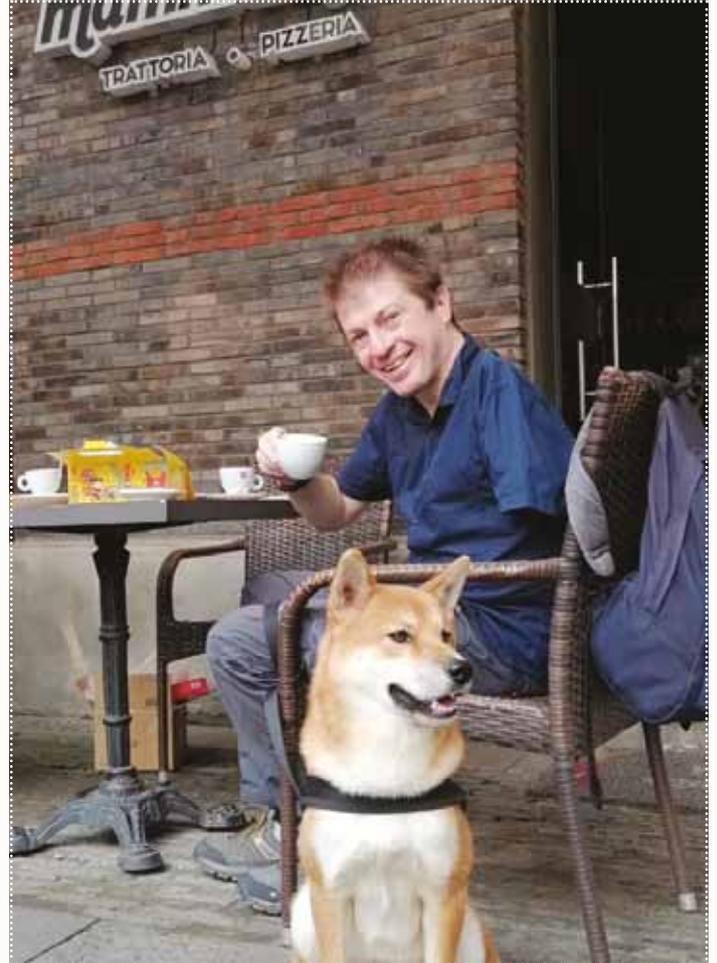
My friends are very much aware that there exists to an extent a global resentment towards China and how the officials in Wuhan originally mismanaged the situation. In reality all people and businesses here also suffered greatly. However having experienced a full and proper lockdown, I can only conclude that, a full lockdown works, social distancing and wearing the mask curtails the spread. I live in a city with over six million people all compacted together and we've had zero cases for months now.

Christmas is coming and it's difficult not knowing when I can return home. Although I mostly only hang out in Chinese bars or with my Chinese friends, I do know quite a lot of ex-pats too. At Christmas, The Red Lion bar, run by an Australian man Stewart and his son Les, invite all their best customers for a Christmas dinner and they put on quite a spread. Definitely something to look forward too.

I also adopted a dog, I renamed him Fintan, from a local shelter

(that's a whole other story) who has now completely taken over my apartment but it's great to have his company as the winter sets in.

I truly hope that everyone at home has a Happy Christmas with their families and friends. Here's to 2021!



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2020 saw the opening in Ballinasloe of the long awaited 17 unit development of special housing for the elderly. The actual completion of the building was carried out under the supervision of the voluntary housing body Cluid. However all the groundwork for the project was initiated by St. Michael's Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

In 2006 the late Maureen O'Connell of Galway City ruled, in her will, that her property in Eyre Square should be sold and that the proceeds of the sale be given to the Society of St Vincent de Paul to be used "for the good of the people of Galway City and County".

Immediately after this news came out the then President of the Ballinasloe Conference, Sister Bridie McInerney, decided that the Conference should investigate how they could acquire a good portion of this money for the benefit of the people of the Ballinasloe area. She asked one of the conference members to set up a sub-committee whose responsibility would be to recommend possible projects, for which conference could look for financial help from the Maureen O'Connell Fund, which was being set up to supervise the distribution of the available funds.

The subcommittee recommended that whilst help should be sought for a number of small projects and certain particularly needy individuals one major project should be chosen. After consideration of numerous possibilities and discussions with many people it was decided that the biggest need was for better housing for those living in unsuitable housing.

The initial plan was to build houses for people on the Housing List who were in completely unsuitable accommodation. The intention was that when these individuals obtained Council Housing then

the property which they were vacating could be handed on to another needy person. Unfortunately this plan met a stone wall as both local authority housing authorities and politicians insisted that once a person moved in to one of the new units they would be considered as being housed and therefore their names would be removed from the Housing List.

The sub-committee therefore recommended that the target should be to provide suitable housing for lonely older people, including men living on their own. The committee members visited voluntary housing in various parts of the country and were especially impressed by an SVP development in Malahide. Contact was made with the architect of this development, Paul Keogh, and he showed great interest in getting involved with designing a similar, though smaller, project in Ballinasloe.

The next step was to find a site. St Brigid's Hospital had a lot of suitable land and from 2007 to 2010 efforts were made to obtain a site there. Both the local authority and the Mental Health authorities, who owned the land, expressed interest but no one would give an answer one way or the other on whether they would make a site available.

In 2010 the subcommittee approached the Catholic Diocese about a site in the Hymany area which had been donated to them. This site was zoned for commercial development. When Bishop Kirby was approached he said that if the Conference was to get this zoning



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changed then the diocese would consider allowing the land to be used as the site for the projected development. With the help of some local politicians this change in zoning was achieved. Because the site had been a gift to the diocesan authorities, clearance then had to be obtained to allow the Church to relinquish this land.

Throughout all this constant contact was kept with the Maureen O'Connell fund committee –the convenor of the Ballinasloe sub-committee was in fact a founder member of this committee and was later replaced by two other Ballinasloe members, Joe Sammon and Kevin Whyte. Unfortunately neither of these stalwarts lived long enough to see their work come to final fruition.

The Galway based committee was always very supportive of the project but whilst their financial support covered all the development costs of the project it was obvious that building costs were rising very rapidly and that there was no way that the fund could go anywhere near covering these costs. An appeal was therefore made to Galway County Council to support an appeal to the Government for financial help. Money at this time was in very short supply and although the Government was keen to encourage building projects this was mainly in the form of loans. The Constitution of the SVP forbade Conferences from going into debt so Galway County Council suggested that the Ballinasloe group meet with Cluid to discuss a joint campaign to get the houses actually built.

From there on Cluid took on the main role in raising the necessary funds from the Government. Working with Paul Keogh they completed the building despite planning complaints from some local residents. Now fourteen years after SVP initiated the process the first residents have started to move in to the beautifully designed, gated complex which is a memorial to all the hard work of so many unnamed people.



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## AUGHRIM APPLE JUICE

BY KEN KELLY

Nothing tastes better than locally produced food. And in these times of growing ecological awareness, we are waking up to the importance of sustainable living. That's why the apple growers of Aughrim have teamed up with the rector of Aughrim to produce their very own pressed apple juice this Christmas.

Aughrim Apple Juice is made from apples grown in the rector's orchard and harvested by local schoolchildren, supplemented by apples donated from local gardens. It's a high-quality local product, which makes the perfect gift this Christmas, and all proceeds go towards the upkeep of the Church of Ireland parish. Retailing at €5 a bottle, it will be available from John Burke's shop in Aughrim and in the local churches.

Aughrim Apple Juice is one of a number of ecological initiatives which are now flourishing on the Aughrim rector's campus. The Rector's Garden Project has seen the old walled garden restored and used to teach local children how to grow their own fruit and



Children from The Glebe National School picking apples in the Aughrim Rector's orchard.

vegetables. The Aughrim Climate Action Park, currently under development, will be a focal point for the local community in their response to climate change and the biodiversity crisis. Each of these are cross-community projects, in which the Church of Ireland parish is partnered by Aughrim Community Development Ltd.

## PASSING OF POPULAR MECHANIC

Ballinasloe lost one of its most popular young men with the passing of John T. Cahill, Society Street, following a long illness. The youngest son of John and Kathleen, John T. was a gifted mechanic, working at home and abroad for top national companies.

The 44-year-old also served on the crew of the local fire brigade for many years, following in the footsteps of his late uncle, Pat, who was fire chief up to his death. Popular with all sections of the community, John T. was a most obliging and entertaining townsman who never hesitated to help out when called on, be it day or night.



There was a poignant turnout by some of his former employers as his remains were taken to St. Michael's Church for his funeral mass. They stood silently by their heavy goods vehicles, many of which John T. had worked on, and as his remains were taken to Kildooney Cemetery, fire tenders and other emergency services accompanied the cortege on its final journey.

John T. is survived by his parents John and Kathleen, by his daughters Sofia and Shauna and their mother Louise, brother Patrick (Kenmare), sisters Cathriona (O'Toole, Clifden), Grainne (Costelloe, Castleconnell), brothers-in-laws, sister-in-law and many other relatives, neighbours and a large circle of friends.



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# GREENWAY ROUTE RECEIVES OVER €8MILLION

The Greenway Project team have confirmed potentially 5 route options available for stage 2 of the Public Consultation from January 2021. With current public health restrictions, this may be an online process.

Cllr Evelyn Parsons welcomed the funding boost from Government announced last month. "In particular it's great to note the Athlone to Galway Greenway under TII is allocated €8.1million euro, the third highest allocation announced nationally.

From the recent public consultation, where the Ballinasloe community really engaged robustly, it's clear that this is the type of investment and sustainable sensitive development we want to see coming through Poolboy, Ballinasloe - not trucks" stated Cllr. Evelyn.

Denis Naughton TD also welcomed the news. "While this project through East Galway is at an early stage of planning I hope, in the short term, that Athlone Castle and the Battle Site at Aughrim can be linked, using both on-road and off-road sections, to create a Siege Cycleway linking both historic sites. I believe this would enhance the local tourism offering as well as attracting visitors to Aughrim, which was the bloodiest battlefield in Irish history."

He also stressed that it is important that local communities let the consultants working on the project know what local areas have to offer and also to continue to express their support, in principle, for a cycleway linking Athlone to Ballinasloe to Athenry and right through to Galway City.

"However, the bridge over the Shannon and the link to Ballinasloe, also provides an opportunity to develop safe routes for children in South Westmeath, South Roscommon and East Galway to cycle to school as well as reducing their carbon footprint" noted the TD.

The €8 million investment, which is 100% funding for Local Authorities to accelerate this project, comprising of €4 million to progress the Athlone to Galway route and €4 million to bring the Greenway across the Shannon on a designated walking and cycling only bridge. The 4th bridge to cross the Shannon at Athlone and into the West will hopefully bring all these visitors one step closer to Ballinasloe!



Senator Aisling Dolan is enthusiastic about the next phase. "As a champion for Ballinasloe on the Greenway route, I look forward to seeing the cycle way options in January and that Ballinasloe could feature on 2-3 of these routes. 600 submissions during stage 1 for the whole route and 200 people who made submissions through my office shows that people see the benefits of the Cycleway for our town and surrounding areas. A pro-active and consultative approach with land-owners, working with IFA Best Practice guidelines, is crucial. If people have any queries please do contact the Greenway Project Team in town on (091) 509267 or myself on 086 3690719 "states Aisling.

All public representatives believe Ballinasloe is a strong choice for next destination in the West and Hidden Heartlands along the Grand Canal and River Suck Blueways & Marina. The Cycleway will be a fantastic infrastructure for our families and communities to walk and cycle bringing opportunities for off-farm income and tourism business transforming towns and villages along the way.

"We want a future that brings investment, tourism and opportunity. I will work to ensure that our County Development Plan reflects this vision for Ballinasloe area and that publicly owned lands along the Grand Canal and the River Suck Callows are used for development of environmentally positive projects to benefit biodiversity, quality of life and eco-tourism. By working in consensus with our communities and prioritising publicly owned lands where possible, we will deliver a Cycleway for the benefit of all in the West" explained the Senator.

For Further Information on the project visit [www.galwaytoathlonecycleway.com](http://www.galwaytoathlonecycleway.com)

BY COLM CROFFY



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Once again a community group is pulling together to articulate and safe guard the GREEN and sustainable future of the town. The first line of defence has been mobilised against the inappropriate location of a waste transfer station in Poolboy, which would force hundreds of trucks through the streets of the town and cause devastating effects to the biosphere and local special area of conservation.

Galway County Council rejected this current application (Oct 2020). And the applicant has given notice to submit again in the next few days and this will be available for public viewing once approved. This follows from the permit declined by Galway Co Council in January 2020 and the successful win for Ballinasloe at the High Court on the previous infill permit in 2018.

The group are very clear on the impact to their town and state that **Ballinasloe Says No to**

- 30 tonne trucks on our streets
- Air pollution in built up urban areas from hundreds of diesel powered vehicles
- Damage to our environment.

Senator Aisling Dolan, Campaign Secretary & PRO noted "It is great to see people pulling together even in this time of lockdown to fight for the future of our community. Our vision for Ballinasloe is developing Greenways, walkways, attracting tourism, investment – making the town an attractive place to live, a place to work & a place to visit."

She detailed that over 20 years ago in 1999 people successfully fought in the High Court for a judgment against the old landfill and future waste uses. In 2018, the Ballinasloe Says No campaign started with so much support from families in the town as well as community groups, businesses, schools and clubs. They started with a leaflet doordrop and hundreds of people at a public meeting in Jan 2018 in the Shearwater Hotel. They won in the High Court in Nov 2018. In Aug 2019 over 2,000 local people made submissions to the planning process and made their serious concerns very clear to Galway Co. Council.

"It shows our proud community spirit as so many have engaged in the campaigns through petitions, objections and attending public meetings. Thank you to everyone for their support - our town is



united and we are ready to fight again for our future" exclaimed the Senator.

"This site in Poolboy is unsuitable for a major waste facility on several grounds. Access for the rubbish trucks is through the town, passing beside our schools and Portiuncula Hospital. It is in close proximity to numerous family homes. Odorous gases, dust, flies and vermin causing multiple health hazards. It is adjacent to the River Suck flood plain. Leachate will contaminate the drinking water and have an adverse effect on the wildlife and migratory birds in the Callows. It would be hard to find a more unsuitable site for a major waste facility and the people of Ballinasloe area must come together to save their town from this monstrosity" stated Dr Vincent Parsons, Chairperson.

Independent Cllr Evelyn Parsons continued "I have huge concerns for the health and safety of our community and the unique sensitive environment around the River Suck Callows and natural floodplains. We need to safeguard our quality of life and ours potential for sustainable tourism development as well as future investment."

Anita Killeen, Ballinasloe Town Team Co-ordinator, urges all the community to unite together in opposition to this waste transfer facility. "We are in a phase of great progress and development, with the completion of the Town Enhancement Plan. Our Town centre is looking wonderful. The Town Team are collaborating with stakeholders on an ambitious 10 year development plan. All this good work will be in vain if the waste transfer facility proceeds."

Follow the group on facebook @ballinasloesaysno & on Instagram @ballinasloe\_says\_no. e: ballinasloesaysno@gmail.com or contact Cllr Dr Evelyn Parsons Independent efrancisparsons@cillr.galwaycoco.ie 0871365793.

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## POPULAR MINISTER AND PEACEMAKER

BY KEN KELLY

Tributes have been pouring in from all over the country, both north and south, following the sudden death of Canon Trevor Arnold Sullivan. The 80-year-old retired clergyman passed away suddenly at his home in Ballinasloe, where he had been a popular resident for over thirty-five years.

A friendly, affable character who was witty, interesting and a great conversationalist, he was a native of Portadown and for nearly fifty years worked tirelessly to promote peace on this island. He toiled quietly and modestly behind the scenes to achieve reconciliation, in difficult times, between both communities, unknown to his parishioners and friends.

Canon Trevor Sullivan is well remembered as Rector of the Aughrim & Creagh Parish Unions, where he served from 1984 until his retirement in 2007. His church ministry began in the 1960s as a lay Church Army captain in England. Following his ordination in the Church of Ireland in 1970, he served in curacies in Shankill, Lurgan and in Tralee & Dingle. He also worked in the Irish School of Ecumenics, as Industrial Chaplain in the dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough, and as rector of Ematrix, Aghabog and Aughnamullen in the Clogher Diocese. During his time in the Diocese of Limerick and Killaloe, he was appointed as rural dean and as Prebend of Inniscattery.



Canon Sullivan's ministry was characterised by his passionate commitment to peace and reconciliation. From the 1970s onwards, he worked with a number of bodies to build peace on this island and served as a consultant at different stages of the peace process. His work with the Battle of Aughrim Interpretive Centre and with the Aughrim Summer School did much to bring together people from the north and south. He will be fondly remembered by the staff and patients of Portiuncula Hospital, where he ministered with deep devotion as hospital chaplain for many years.

Canon Sullivan had a very active retirement, during which he continued to minister in a number of parishes, including Athlone Parish in the Dioceses of Meath and Kildare, and in the Ardagh Union and Roscommon Parish in the Dioceses of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh.

Following the news of his sudden death, there has been a deep outpouring of affection for Canon Sullivan from former parishioners, clergy, colleagues and people in the wider community, who remember his life and ministry with such fondness. Their thoughts and prayers are with his wife Doris, their daughters Moynagh and Johanne, grandchildren Ellen, Samson, Matthew, Rachel and Eva, his sons-in-laws Mike and Ivan as well many other relatives and friends.

Villagers turned out along the route as the cortege passed through on its way to Aughrim New Cemetery, following a private funeral.

## A COMMITTED NURSE AND SPORTSMAN

BY KEN KELLY



Following on from the passing of Frank Dooley, the nursing community in the Ballinasloe area were shocked to learn of the death of Thomas V. Howley, just over two weeks later. Both were psychiatric nurses in St. Brigid's and were held in the highest esteem by their colleagues, patients and the wider community.

Though born in Killahornia, Creagh, Tommie Howley, spent twenty two years living in Dolanstown, Ballydangan, where he immersed himself into the community of South Roscommon. As well as being secretary and treasurer of the Padraig Pearses' GAA Club, he was a tireless worker for the hall committee, the Church and the local Co-op among others. Later he moved nearer to Ballinasloe town, living in the Creagh area.

After training as a psychiatric nurse at the Ballinasloe Hospital, Tommie studied for his General Nursing in England. He later graduated to be a Clinical Teacher in St. Brigid's as well St. Patrick's in Castlerea and UCHG. A highly popular Community Nurse, Tommie went on to be Assistant Chief Nursing Officer in St. Brigid's-a post he held up to his retirement.

An avid golfer, winning a Captain's Prize among other awards, Tommie Howley was honoured with the captaincy of the Ballinasloe Golf Club in the 1989 season. He was a huge supporter of the parent club and the seniors, often organising fund-raising events such as table quizzes etc. Playing off a handicap of 9, golf was his first love and he was proud to see his son Nigel turn professional, where he now works out of the Balbriggan Golf Club.

Tommie's sporting loyalties were divided between the Galway Hurlers and the Roscommon Footballers and it was ironic his passing should occur only a few days before his beloved Padraig Pearses won the Roscommon county senior hurling title. He would

have been so proud of the club he had served as an officer with for many years.

The late Tommy Howley was laid to rest in Moore New Cemetery and is predeceased by his brother Jimmy. He is survived by his wife Pauline, sons Jason and Nigel, daughters-in-law Laura and Grainne, grandchildren Ayla, A.J. and Ellie, sisters Angela, Kathleen, Bernie and Breda; brothers Jackie and Ray, as well as many other relatives, neighbours and friends.



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The Parish of Moore was rocked by the deaths of two of its greatest community activists, in the space of five days. Even though there was a big age gap, both May Greene and Cathy Glennon had been trailblazers in several fields in the community and their passing is deeply mourned. As both ladies were laid to rest in their local cemetery, hundreds lined the funeral routes to bid a fond farewell to two stalwarts that were more than pillars of the community.



**MAY GREENE** was a founder member of the Moore and Clonfad Drama Society and appeared in many plays, variety shows, and Scór where alongside Patrick Kenny, Marcella Grehan and Mary Flynn, she reached the Scór National Finals. She was a

hugely active member of the ICA and was Roscommon Federation President and held many other positions. May was also a founding member of the Moore Active Retirement Group, a member of Moore Civil Defence and the Moore Choir, and not surprisingly, Roscommon Community Person of the Year in 2006. May also represented Moore on the Roscommon Leader Partnership Board.

Of course, May is lovingly remembered for the important role in the lives of generations of children and young people (and their parents), getting everyone safely to school and in a time when there was no power steering on school buses! Some of us especially remember the race we had to sit at the back of the bus so we would benefit from the bumpy Shannonbridge road and the absolute joy when those bumps rose us from our seats. Good times!!

May was the beloved wife of the late Jimmy Greene and is survived by her children Prof Richard Greene (Cork), Chrissie (Kelly, home), Mary Greene (Dublin), Michael (home), Patrick (home), and Kenneth (New York), daughters-in-law Anne, Josephine, Marie and Suzanne and son-in-law Paddy, her brother Tom (Athlone), sisters Anna, Sr. Bridie (Dublin) and Kathleen (Athy) and sisters-in-law Maureen, Mary and Anne, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and a wide circle of good friends and great neighbours.



**CATHY GLENNON** was 52 years old and packed so much into her too short life. Originally from Kilnahown, Aughrim, Co. Galway, Cathy Larkin crossed 'the border' when she married her beloved Michael Glennon and lived in Camcloon, Moore, where she laid strong family and community foundations which will have a lasting positive impact for many years to come.

Cathy played and was involved with Camogie, football, and soccer and supported her two boys in their sporting and other activities. She was on committees and management teams with the Moore United Football Club and with Pdraig Pearses GAA Club. Cathy was encouraging, supportive, and provided valuable advice and coaching to players. She was currently secretary for the Pearses Minor Hurling Board. Cathy won an All-Ireland Football medal 1992 with the Galway Ladies' team. She was a member of the Pearses Camogie Team that won a Camogie County Final in 2018, when she had just turned 50!!

Cathy was a member of the Moore Pastoral Council. She was on the Board of Management and Parents Association of Camcloon National School down through the years and even hosted the Christmas Crib children's production in her farm shed one year, which still provides lovely memories. Cathy was supportive of and engaged in many IFA, Moore Community Council, and other community activities – these are simply too numerous to include all here.

Cathy was pre-deceased by her daughter, Frances-Emily; father, Laurence; sister, Rita; and brother, John. She is survived by her husband Mike, her beloved sons Martin and Shane; her mother Mary Delia, sisters Mary, Anne, Pauline, Helen, Martina and Claire; brothers Frank, Liam, and Tony as well as many other relatives, neighbours and a large circle of friends.

Both ladies have left a positive legacy in the community and beyond, one that won't be forgotten.

# BALLYFORAN AND KILLASOLAN NS WINNERS



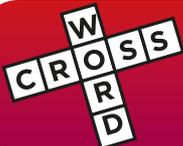
Congratulations to the pupils of Ballyforan NS, Ballyforan-Dysart-Tisrara parish, Co. Roscommon, pictured here with their school principal, Mr. Thomas Murray; Parish Priest, Fr. Francis Beirne and teacher, Ms Finlan, and to the pupils of Killasolan NS, Ahascragh-Caltra parish, Co. Galway, pictured with their priest, Fr. Tensin Perera and principal, Ms Gabrielle Boner, on their recent success in the Veritas sponsored inaugural CREIDEAMH Faith and Friendship Children's Art Competition ([www.creideamh.ie/art](http://www.creideamh.ie)).

Budding artists of both school communities claimed 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th prizes and the art work of all remaining pupils was highly commended by the adjudicators.

The theme of this year's competition was 'The Lord is My Shepherd' and it was open to 3rd, 4th and 5th class pupils attending primary schools in seventeen parishes in the greater Ballinasloe area. CREIDEAMH School Liaison Officer, Mr. John Weldon, presenting (on the right in all photos), expressed thanks to all who assisted the children



enter and conveyed the CREIDEAMH group's hope to run a similar competition in 2021.



Don't forget to enter our new **CROSSWORD** page 30 and **WIN** a **Cooper Hurling Helmet**

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# Scoil An Chroi Naofa Enjoy Science Week



Ms. A. Kelly's class quiz.



Experiment using skittles in Ms Shaughnessy's Class .



Mr Noones class.



Congratulations to Thia Jones, pictured with Ard Scoil Mhuire Principal Paraic Hanlon who received a rosette for her achievements in the InterSchools competition last year.



Ms Murrays Fourth Class wrote and deliver letters to some of the Residents of the Mill Race Nursing Home



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## THIS YEARS AWARDS ARE AS FOLLOWS

**Back Row:** Mr. Paul Walsh (Principal), Mr. Stephen Reilly (Past Principal)  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Row:** Seamus Egan (Snr Rugby Player of the Year), Eoin Keogh (Snr Soccer Player of the Year), Conor Coleman (Principal's Award)  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Row:** Jack Delaney (Parents Association Award), Ms. Jacinta Deady-Henry (Deputy Principal), Matthew Devine (Irl Rugby U18 School Selection)  
**Front Row:** Ms. Karen Crimmins (Year Head), Niall Collins (Snr Hurling Player of the Year & The Iomar Barrett Sports Award Recipient), Solomon Jiju (Caxton Student of the Year), Eoin McManus (Snr Gaelic Footballer of the Year), Ms. Collette Quinn (Year Head)

Photo Credit Joan Madden



## Newtown NS Halloween Spectacle



Newtown NS decided to have something a little different this year for their Halloween Spectacle. Each class got to model their costumes on the outdoor catwalk. This was then followed by lots of Halloween games and fun filled activities . It was a "Spooktacular Day" enjoyed by everyone.

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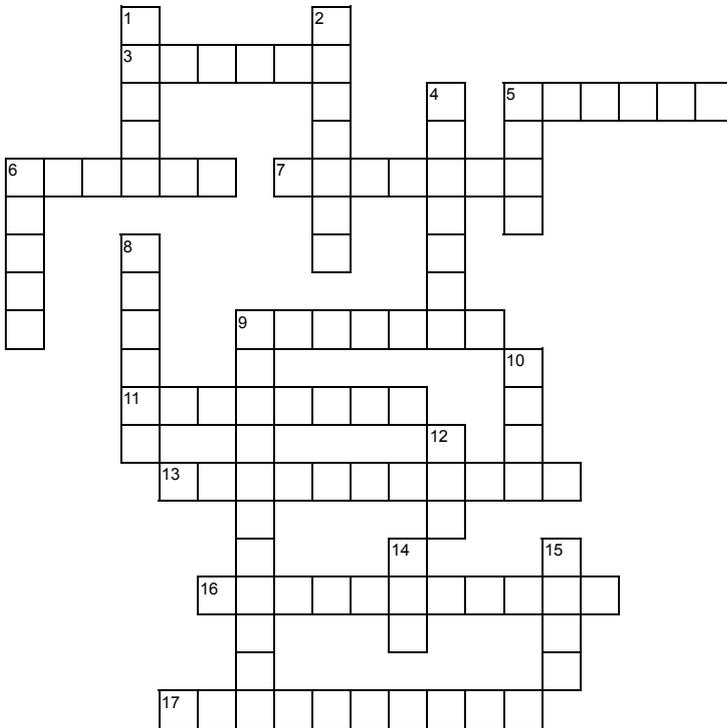


# BALLINASLOE CROSSWORD

# No. 103

(Sponsored by Cooper Helmets, Poolboy Ind. Estate, Ballinasloe).

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### Across

- 3 Irish for Fair (6)
- 5 Old Soldiers Recreation Building in Fairgreen (3, 3)
- 6 Lavinia Sheridan was known as (6)
- 7 Council Housing Estate Nickname (3, 4)
- 9 Old Quarry in Brackernagh (7)
- 11 Oldest Housing Estate, St. \_\_\_\_\_ Terrace (8)
- 13 Fundraiser for National School in 50's (5, 6)
- 16 Popular former schoolteacher (6, 5)
- 17 King of the Fair in the 50's (3, 7)

### Down

- 1 Boat used on Grand Canal (5)
- 2 Former Hall in Society Street (7)
- 4 Bishop of Clonfert, Dr. Michael (7)
- 5 Late John \_\_\_\_\_ Dunne (4)
- 6 Former Boxing champ, \_\_\_\_\_ Donnellan (5)
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery (5)
- 9 Cemetery in Cleaghmore known as (7, 4)
- 10 Fairgreen Landmark: \_\_\_\_\_ Station (4)
- 12 Derrymullen boasts how many All-Ireland GAA medals (3)
- 14 Showband singer \_\_\_\_\_ Lynch (3)
- 15 Irish for Clock (4)

**Completed Crossword (or a photocopy) to be returned not later than December 31<sup>st</sup>, to CROSSWORD, C/o Ballinasloe Life, BACD Office, Creagh, Ballinasloe.**

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

Address.....

Winner will be drawn from correct entries and receive a Cooper Hurling Helmet. T & C apply.

**Answers to Crossword 102:** Across 4-Duffy, 6-Gullanes, 9-Brackernagh, 11-Rutherford, 12-Hernon, 13-Des Fretwell, 14-Noel Mannion, 16-Kilclooney, 17-FMDM, 19-Clancarty. Down: 1-Wolfe Tone, 2-The Curragh, 3-Quinlan, 5-Basin, 7-Ada, 8-Central, 9-Brendan Glynn, 10-Crowley, 15-OCarroll, 18-McNevin.

THE FIRST CORRECT ENTRY OPENED WAS HELEN MANNION, THE LODGE, AUGHRIM, BALLINASLOE.

And is the winner of the €50 Voucher sponsored by KPW Print.

## THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER...

BY KEVIN KAVANAGH

**AUGHRIM VILLAGE** will be once again be lit up for the festive season, while the open-air crib will be the focal point. The lighting throughout the village will be switched on by the local clergy on 8th December.

**BILLY MURPHY**, Cross, Kilconnell, was a former Ballinasloe and Connacht interprovincial rugby winger, as well as being a renowned sprinter on the athletics front, in the fifties. He later became a formidable golfer. Billy was part of a family business that included a shop, pub, petrol station and wool merchants.

**EAST GALWAY GROUP, CREIDEAMH**, have raised €10,340 for Syrian Refugee Camps in the Lebanon. The organising committee includes members living in parts of East Galway and South Roscommon.

**THE BRODERICK SISTERS** in Kilconnell, have retired from business after 45 years. The grocery and newsagency was run by Winnie, Catherine and

Theresa, having taken over the premises from the Joyce family. Winnie worked in Hickey's shop, as a schoolgirl before moving on to Giblin's and later Joyce's. The three ladies were known for their friendliness, courtesy and service over the years.

**BEIBHINN PARSONS AND HEATHER PAYNE**, both from Ballinasloe, again featured on Irish international ladies' rugby and soccer teams respectively, recently. Although not among the scorers, both young ladies performed well and have bright futures. Their schedule of the remaining games were cancelled because of Covid-19 casualties.

**CALTRA DRAMA GROUP** are hoping to raise funds for their newly built stage/extension in the local Community Centre by holding a scrap metal collection. Drop off/collection points can be arranged by contacting Liam 086 3521872 or Sean 086 8462310.

# OUT AND ABOUT



September Car Draw winner Gerry Headd with Mary Headd, Michael Kelly Kilmartins Garage and Marian Brady BCU



Ballinasloe Credit Union bids farewell to staff members Catherine Kelly and Martina Loughnane who retired recently from Ballinasloe Credit Union. Between them Catherine & Martina had over 50 years of dedicated service to the members of Ballinasloe Credit Union. Tributes from Credit Union CEO Grainne Murphy described the ladies as fantastic co-workers and friends who would be missed in the office by colleagues and members. She thanked Catherine and Martina for their years of commitment and enthusiasm to serving the members of our Credit Union and concluded by wishing both a happy and long retirement.



Congrats to Margaret and Stanley Clarke who on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November celebrated their Gold Wedding Anniversary. They were wed in St. Bridgids Church Curraghboy and the Reception was held in Haydens with Brendan Shine providing the entertainment



Local musical and singing legend, Bobby Kilkenny, entertains at a seisiún in Ballinasloe, last January



Alan McGuire of "The Countryman Bar and Lounge" (Main Sponsor) presented the "Teamwear for the Teams" to Men's Club Captain John Hurley Jr. Back Aidan Dooley and Mattie Curley, managers Junior Cup team, Mike Barrett and Jack Coughlan managers Jimmy Bruen team.

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Some of the Group setting off on the Canal Walk from Poolboy

On 13<sup>th</sup> December at 9.30 am walks and trails are running their Christmas Walk followed by a party. They will also be running a St Stephen's Day walk at 10am. All details will be posted on the Facebook page and whatsapp group.

On setting up Ballinasloe Walks and Trails two years ago the aim was to bring awareness to the beautiful walks available on our doorstep and that has been far exceeded. As a group of friends walking for fun many friendships have developed.

People who would have found walking a kilometer daunting are now walking up to 15km three times a week. The environment of the group lends itself to walkers having a community where there are few rules or regulations only to take full responsibility for their own safety, comfort and support their fellow walkers.

The benefits of walking are not just physical, mental and emotional, it certainly does your spirit good as well. Walkers chat along the way and there is always a stop for refreshments.

A favourite for many is along the banks of the canal. Even if you walked the length and back every day there is such a diverse natural peace and grace to be found in the changing colours of the plants and vegetation, the insects and animals. This aliveness can truly invigorate and motivate the shyest of walkers to new levels of excitement and adventure.

and connect with so many different people who have a variety of life experiences and knowledge. Interesting, kind, generous folk who share a curiosity in nature and each other. No matter what worries I may be carrying prior to the walks I certainly feel lighter after leaving them somewhere in the bog, forests, fields along the canal or within another's compassionate response. Ballinasloe Walks and Trails have given me a space and community to ease the aches of the heart. It is to borrow Oprah's phrase, of 'Soul Sunday'.

Some stand out Walks for member Liam Kenny include Ballinasloe to Shannon Harbour, a long ramble starting at the canal in Poolboy across flat bogland and well defined paths all the way to Shannon Harbour. It was a long hike but a fabulous sunny Sunday finishing with well deserved refreshments in the village before getting the bus home.

Clonmacnoise, another beautiful loop walk starting at the monastery and progressing uphill with beautiful views of the monastery and river. After about 9 km we turned back and I think it was downhill all the way home.

Woodlawn Woods, is a little treasure of a walk, tracking all the way through the woods and around by the house and other interesting buildings, is to be highly recommended.

"Walking can reduce stress, helps to ward off depression, gives you more energy and a great night's sleep after a good hike, Liam explains. "For me, not the most social of people at the best of times, I find I have developed a great circle of friends through walking and I can happily spend time in their company chatting and listening to their expertise on anything from trees, birds, plants and indeed butterflies, more should join" states Liam.

With growing children though and more available time, loneliness can easily creep in. On the first morning of joining Walks and Trails, despite my unusual anxiety, a stronger desire took over my world. The warm welcome I received, the surprising beautiful scenery and the genuine fun had buoyed me along from walk to walk in the early days" states Sabrina Harvey, who joined the group this spring.

She continues "There is a soothing of my mind that occurs on the walks as I chat



Liam Kenny

The group enjoy preserving and patrolling these areas with efforts of cleanups where some have yet to see the value in these walks and instead dump their rubbish. We will prevail and be guardians until they learn to stop destroying are their children's future.

"Ironically, in the year that we were all forced apart and disconnected from each other, I found a space to connect with others, ground myself, and find a new personal confidence. I have found social groups

and meeting new people as many of us; have sometimes daunting.



Sabrina Harvey and Yvonne Kenny



Don't forget to enter our new **CROSSWORD**

page 30 and **WIN** a **Cooper Hurling Helmet**



# ACCESSIBILITY BALLINASLOE REFLECT AND PLAN BY LIAM COSGROVE



Accessibility Ballinasloe AGM L-R; Marion Ruane (PRO), Stephen Roche (Secretary), Teresa Coughlan (Treasurer), Deborah Brady (Chairperson). Missing from the committee were Darragh Flynn (Social Inclusion officer), Shane McDermott (Vice Secretary) and Mairead Carney (GRD REP)

The Accessibility Ballinasloe Team held their Annual General Meeting last month, in line with NPHEt guidelines. Chairperson Deborah Brady thanked the Committee for all their hard work and input to date and for giving their time so generously. 'We are a small group but already have achieved so much since 2016. Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has'.

This past year the group has worked hard on one focus "Inclusion". Deborah referred to the positive impact Accessibility Ballinasloe has in the community noting "we have opened doors for people to be a part of their community and to be seen as valued citizens who can shape their community for the betterment of all. During this time of uncertainty our group is even more valued than ever as those who were once isolated are once again due to their vulnerable nature."

Among some of the key successes reviewed were:

**Make Way Day** - this project highlights the many obstacles people with mobility issues face on a daily basis due to obstacles such as cars parked on paths, wheelie bins left in the middle of paths etc. Last year, they used the opportunity to engage with the local Garda and Traffic Warden to communicate the ongoing issues and concerns.

**Social Inclusion Concert** - they were delighted to host and organise their 2nd Social Inclusion concert which was a huge success. A variety of groups such as Active Retirement, Social Services, Brothers of Charity, Involve Youth Project and Scoil Ui Cheithearnaigh participated. Marina Downey provided light refreshments on the day.

**Covid Response:** they were successful in their application for Covid-19 funding from Galway Rural Development for the provision of care packages (food parcels, self-care and activity packs) for people with disabilities in the community who were cocooning or not receiving their normal day service. They worked closely with Brothers of Charity services Social Work team and Managers to identify those most in need of the care packages. Over a 100 care packages were delivered to families in the Community. They have made a new application for funding focusing on- care packages for the elderly in the community and will continue to apply to assist the current gaps.

They also worked in partnership with Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, Galway Rural Development and KPW Printers to collate, publish and distribute over 2,000 copies of a local resource of information sheet to support those who were cocooning or in a vulnerable group.

Deborah stated 'We need to be creative and innovative in how we reach out to the most vulnerable in our community but also how we can support and empower our community groups, sport groups, businesses, services, education providers to keep inclusion and accessibility at the forefront of their decisions so we all progress through this time together.'

They are developing their 2020/2021 Action Plan and would be delighted to hear from you - if you have any ideas or suggestions in relation to Accessibility which you would like to see addressed, please contact our Team directly @ [accessibilitybsloe@gmail.com](mailto:accessibilitybsloe@gmail.com). Follow us on Facebook @ Accessibility Ballinasloe.



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# Noah & Rowan Benson-Gately Support Group

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Draw will take place on Sat. 2nd Jan. 2021 in Dysart Community Centre  
This advert is sponsored by Keller Travel and Keller's of Ballinasloe.

Superhero fanatic Noah (6) and farming-mad Rowan (4) Benson-Gately were diagnosed with a rare genetic disease, Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), in January of this year.

Their parents are Sean Gately, a native of Dysart, Roscommon, and Bianca Benson, from Athlone. Sean is a brother to two well-known Ballinasloe faces, Michael Gately who works for Tony Carroll butchers and Anita Gately Burke, of Keller Travel for many years on Main Street. The Bensons are a well-known musical family from Athlone.

The condition is a progressive neuromuscular disorder, causes the muscles in the body to become weak, primarily in the hips and legs. DMD has no known cure, to date.

“To receive this diagnosis for both our sons was surreal and is still extremely difficult to comprehend” stated Mum Bianca.

As time goes on, more and more support will be needed to ensure their passage through childhood and development is as smooth as possible in the circumstances, and in response, local community people of the Dysart/Ballyforan area, launched the Noah & Rowan Benson-Gately Support Group in summer of this year.

Bianca and Sean are honest in acknowledging that the road ahead “is not quite the life we had hoped or planned for our children, the road ahead will be tough but with the love and support of our families, friends and community we hope to make the journey a little easier for Noah and Rowan”.

The group is a community response to create a fund to support the development of the two boys and may also be used to cover any other unexpected financial burden associated with their wellbeing and quality of life. The Noah & Rowan Benson-Gately Support Group is also dedicated to raising awareness of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, while supporting the practical needs of Noah & Rowan into the future.

Earlier this year, a gofundme page at <https://ie.gofundme.com/f/noah-and-rowan-bensongately-support-group> was launched, which introduced the family and their story to the wider public.

A family fun Cycle/Walk took place in August and a River Suck Decent Challenge, where a group of hardy local volunteers, paddled the full 120km length of the Suck in Kayaks! Both events we warmly supported. “We have been truly touched by



Sean Gately and Bianca Benson with their two boys Noah and Rowan

the enormous outpouring of compassion shown to us and wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to each and everyone for their support” states Bianca.

The next initiative is a fundraising draw where on Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021, one lucky person will win a brand new Volkswagen Golf 8. Tickets are available online at [www.winagolf.ie](http://www.winagolf.ie) or from any of our committee members.

The group would like to acknowledge the support of Michael Moore car sales in Athlone and DPD who have made the whole event possible. Their support has enabled the group to offer this great prize and professionally set up the [winagolf.ie](http://winagolf.ie) website while promoting ticket sales through both their extensive networks. Ticket prices are 1 for €20, 3 for €50 and 7 for €100.



Some of the steering Committee of the Support Group with Sean, Bianca, Noah and Rowan at launch during summer.

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# TOWN TEAM PAVES THE WAY FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

“Sustainability” is certainly the buzz word and concept of the moment. But what does it actually mean? When individuals and society, provide for their own needs, without compromising the prospects of their children and grandchildren, that’s sustainability.

The term is broadly used to indicate programmes, initiatives and actions aimed at the preservation of a particular resource. There are 4 main pillars of sustainability – human, social, economic and environmental.

Environmental sustainability requires awareness of resource consumption, in particular energy. In December 2015, Ireland’s Energy White Paper was launched. This document set out government actions to achieve a low carbon energy system by 2050 and become carbon-free by 2100. This energy transition requires all energy users to think and act differently.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) was established as Ireland’s national energy authority under the Sustainable Energy Act 2002. The SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) programme was developed to support communities to develop energy management skills and knowledge. This includes low carbon transport and heating, and investing in smart technologies. A key part of this programme is the SEC Network which was established by SEAI in 2015 to support a national movement of SECs.

Ballinasloe Town Team has taken a progressive leap forward by joining the SEC Network to become a SEC. We have ambitious goals to become one of the leading urban sustainable energy communities in Ireland.

When a community like ours joins the SEC Network, we learn about community energy and start to think about what we can do on the ground to become more energy efficient. This learning period is an opportunity to:

- Start thinking about energy use in our own community in an informed way



- Learn from energy experts
- Learn about energy technologies and the types of solutions available
- Learn from communities who have conducted local energy projects

We look to other hugely successful communities like; Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative which is a community led, One Stop Shop, home insulation upgrade & retrofitting organisation, whose aims are to; improve householders living conditions i.e. warmer, more efficient houses; alleviate fuel poverty; save money –through awareness of household energy efficiency; create jobs in the local communities and reduce carbon footprint.

Clonakilty Sustainable Community bike scheme, the concept of which emerged from a key learning point from their 2020 Roadmap, that one third of energy demand in the Clonakilty area was attributable to transport.

And not to mention the Aran Islands Energy Co-op – a community owned energy cooperative

who are working towards becoming self-sufficient in locally generated renewable energy and free of dependence on oil, coal and gas by 2022.

There are inspiring communities all around Ireland taking part in sustainable projects and initiatives. We want the same for Ballinasloe. The wider community is essential to the success of our SEC. We want to lead, influence, engage and enable our local citizens to make better energy choices.

We aim to officially launch our SEC early 2021 We plan to use several platforms of engagement to share our local community energy story; meetings, social media platforms, local newspapers etc. We want to involve a range of different energy users in the community such as homes, sports clubs, schools, community centres, churches and businesses. In this way, our SEC connects sustainable energy, local economic development and public wellbeing.

If you would like to get involved and join our journey we would absolutely love to hear from you. Feel free to contact Anita Killeen on email; ballinasloetownteam@gmail.com

BY ANITA KILLEEN



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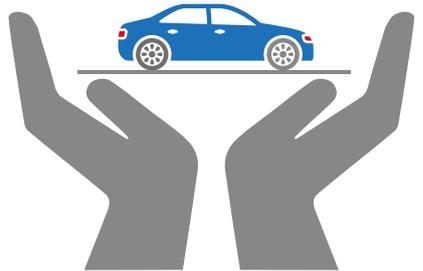
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The parish of Aughrim in East Galway is bracing itself for a possible visit of the last surviving member of the world famous pop group, The Bee Gees, in the coming year. It is hoped that 74-year-old Barry Gibb will visit the ancestral home in Newcastle, Aughrim, where his great-grandfather, James Lynch, was born in 1872 before emigrating to Manchester.

James had three sisters, who all left for the USA, got married and never returned to Aughrim. James Lynch married an Irish girl, Cecilia Jennings in Manchester and they had a daughter, Nora. She subsequently married

Earnest Pass, in Lancashire and their daughter, Barbara Pass, who was born in Bolton, on 17th November 1920, married Hugh Leslie Gibb on 27th May 1944, who was then a band musician.

world-wide fame and recognition and is now recognised as the best-selling soundtrack of all time.

Barbara Gibb sadly buried three of her sons, Andy who died at the age of 30, in 1988; Maurice (53) died in 2003 and Robin (62) died in 2012. However she herself, who was a noted singer in her youth, lived to be 96 and passed away in 2016 but her husband, Hugh, died in Las Vegas in 1992 at the age of 74.

So, the only surviving member of the Bee Gees is Barry Gibb, now aged 74 and living in Miami, USA. He has family connections in the West of Ireland, with cousins in Ballinasloe, Galway and Sligo as well as in many parts of the USA.

The ruins of the ancestral home in Newcastle, Aughrim, from



Mr. and Mrs. Gibb then went on to have four sons: Barry, Maurice, Robin and Andrew. In 1958, the Bee Gees pop trio were established by Barry, Maurice and Robin. Inside ten years they were world famous, taking Australia and the USA by storm with such records as "Massachusetts" in 1968, "Stayin' Alive" and "Too Much Heaven" among others.

The Bee Gees were especially successful as a popular music act in the late 60's and early 70's. In that era they were competing against groups such as The Beatles, Abba and The Beach Boys. Their younger brother, Andy, who had gone solo, was lined up to join the group but he died tragically at the age of 30. In the mid-seventies, the film "Saturday Night Fever" hit the screens and the music scores were written by the trio, which catapulted them to



where Barry's great-grandfather emigrated nearly 150 years ago, is another reminder of the path Irish people took in the 19th century to seek their fortune in faraway lands. James Lynch may not have achieved it but his great-grandchildren certainly did.

A visit by the last surviving Bee Gee would be welcomed, not only by his Irish cousins, but also by the nation, to mark the achievements of a pop star, with Irish blood in his veins, who went on to become a world legend. The historic village of Aughrim awaits you Barry.

Incidentally, Aughrim-born Gerry Kelly, who is an international nightclub entrepreneur in South Beach, Miami, had the heart-throb trio as customers on many occasions over the years, oblivious to the Irish connection. Gerry was born within a mile of the Bee Gees' ancestral home in Newcastle and hopes to persuade Barry Gibb, some day, to make the trip to Aughrim.

## ACCORD FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES STILL AVAILABLE

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They provide a range of support services within the Ballinasloe centre, located in the Family Centre, John Dunne Avenue, Brackernagh. You will also find their contact details and the times when the secretary is available to speak with you. Should you wish to make contact outside the times when our office is without

secretarial support, you may avail of the facility below; they will respond to your query as soon as possible.

Counselling Appointments are arranged for daytime or evening to suit client needs.

Phone daytime – 0909643573 or if not in use try - 086 4149033.



## COMING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS 1961 - The Red Lad and the Panda

*In the 50's and 60's it was quite an ordeal to come home from Britain to Ireland for Christmas. The last-minute rush was ridden with delays, frustration and many tears. It took at least 15 hours, travelling by boat and train, often in freezing conditions, to reach home. My trip home to Ballinasloe in 1961 was memorable, to say the least, with my late friend, Sean Egan, known as "The Red Lad." Tommy Ryan recalls what happened.*

**"What's he saying-what's he saying, Sham?" There was little doubt the question was directed at me and absolutely no doubt as to who was directing it. The East Galway accent, his particular rapid delivery and sentences ending with "Sham" were his trademark.**

What the man in the ticket office at Birmingham's New Street train station had just told me was that he could not sell me two return tickets to Ballinasloe, or indeed anywhere else in Ireland, without sailing tickets (which I had forgot to get) or had run out some two weeks earlier.

As I turned from the window to convey the devastating news, I saw HIM holding court with a large group of prospective travellers with assorted baggage, mostly teenagers. From the Belmullet and Kiltimagh areas of Mayo, they were all working for one of their own-JJ Gallagher & Sons-one of the Midland's biggest contractors, whose paymaster had pre-booked sailing tickets for them all. Our dilemma did not seem to bother HIM and it certainly evoked little sympathy from the Mayo lads who, jokingly, offered us spare tickets at exorbitant prices before a 16-year-old suggested a lifeline-his cousin and some pals had bought train tickets to Holyhead, without sailing tickets, the previous night and as far as he knew, they had made it home.

There was no discussion. He was adamant, buy two tickets and head off. No problem.

However, back at the ticket office there was a problem. The 7.50 pm departure the Mayo lads were catching, and which we had hoped to be on, was sailing tickets only and fully booked. But, tickets to Holyhead could be purchased for the last train at 10.10 pm and despite advice to the contrary, from behind the window, I turned and handed HIM his ticket.

We now had three hours to kill and we took the short walk to a club in Broad St. It was the club's final night open before the holidays and a few members were making the most of it. Games of table-tennis, darts and poker were played and a few raffle tickets bought.



**As we bade our goodbyes at 9.30, heading for the exit, the club's steward called my friend and I, approached us with a huge toy wrapped in clear cellophane, tied off with a white bow, informing me that I had won first prize in the raffle-a giant 4-foot high Panda. A departing joke it apparently was not. So could it be swapped for something to fit in a suitcase I asked, but before my request was**

**answered the Panda was grabbed by HIM, saying "He's never been to Ballinasloe. He'll love it, Sham."**

With his full promise of total ownership and responsibility, I agreed He could keep it as we headed for the Station, through a biting east wing and driving sleet, just two days short of Christmas Eve. The platform was crowded and the tannoy informed us the train was running late as extra carriages had to be added at Reading and Coventry.

We managed to squeeze onto the last carriage and as we set off in search of seats, He was prepared to show, discuss and even invent stories about the Giant Panda. Refusing many offers to sell, engaging with a good natured crowd, so much so, that we hadn't noticed extra carriages being added at Wolverhampton, making it, according to the ticket collector, the longest train ever to run on British rails.

The news of our presence had spread, as each carriage we entered a big cheer went up. Everyone wanted to feel it, buy it or even steal it. There was only one show in town that night-The Red Lad and the Panda-and he was loving it.

The laughter died and panic set in when at the stop in Bangor we were informed that only those with sailing tickets should alight at Holyhead. At least, from the general reaction, it was clear we were not the only ones without them, by a long way.

As part of the long queue on the platform and shunted between several ticket offices, we eventually got to purchase our tickets for Ballinasloe. The Panda was free, we were told, as long as he didn't occupy a seat. We then learned we would not be accommodated



on the mail boat sailing at 3 am, nor would hundreds more with sailing tickets, because of a booking error at Head Office.

**Eventually we embarked on the Princess Maud at 3.30 am. Those with sailing tickets had priority and quickly grabbed the interior seats. We were directed to the top open deck where we got a comfortable space, beside the funnel, and settled in for a very rough crossing.**

As the Dun Laoire lighthouse came into view, a shrill scream split the silence "There's a bear over there with red hair." And indeed there was. He had fallen asleep, with his head over the top of the Panda and his red locks gave it a full crop. The screamer got some choice words from the packed deck, now wide awake.

We joined a big crowd at Westland Row, standing three deep, for the Galway train, already there empty with doors locked. By now the crowd were well acquainted with the Panda as "The Red Lad" continued to introduce it. The train could not accommodate the throngs and, to add insult to injury, a whole carriage had notices on the windows "Reserved for Departmental Civil Service Staff Only." The irony of which was, at that time, all Government Departments were being fully or partially funded by monies sent back to Ireland by the same, weary immigrants, many of whom would have stand all the way to Galway.

Our departure again was late. Extra carriages fell short of demand. We eventually got a seat in Athlone and as HE sat opposite me, hidden behind the Panda on his lap, I reflected on the extraordinary journey we had made to get home for Christmas. As the train rattled over the Red Bridge, a four-foot high Panda hit me in the chest as The Red Lad jumped to his feet, grabbed his suitcase off the rack, with the words "Ryan, if any of the lads see you getting off the train with that-you're finished."

**I had always promised, or threatened him, that one day I would tell HIS story.**

*Tommy Ryan.*

*RIP Sean Egan (The Red Lad) 1942-2001.*



## ELEANOR SHANLEY & JOHN FEELEY RELEASE NEW ALBUM



Recorded in the beautiful Meelick Friary, nestled next to the River Shannon in Eyrecourt, Co. Galway, *Cancion de Amor* by Eleanor Shanley and John Feeley has been released in time for the Christmas market.

This year was the year which gifted us all time and lots of it, so 2020 would be the year was completed. John was born in Ballinasloe and now lives in Co. Wicklow and while born and raised in Co. Leitrim, Eleanor now lives in Ballinasloe, so both were familiar with the church where the record was recorded. St. Francis Church, Meelick Friary has been in use since 1414 AD, making it the most continuously used Roman Catholic Church in the country. To their joy Fr Declan McInerney kindly gave them permission to record the album at this historic and beautiful location and when Covid restrictions allowed they set about completing the album also in the same location.

The thirteen-track long play features so many beautiful songs including the Brendan Graham original, *Cancion de Amor*, which also gives the album its title. This song was gifted to Eleanor and John and they are privileged to be the first to release it. Eleanor remembers "We both fell in love with Cancion

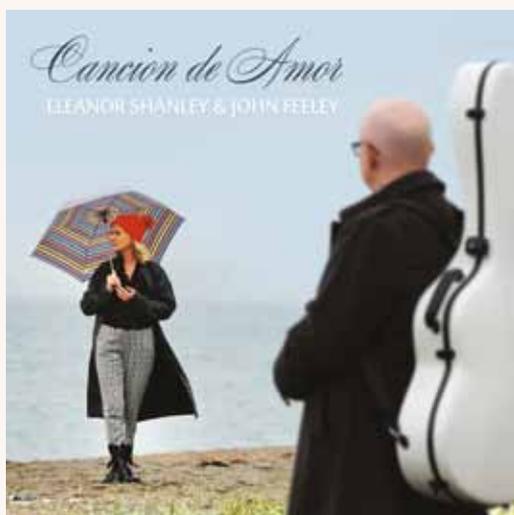
de Amor on our first listen and were thrilled when Brendan gave it to us for the record. John is our country's finest classical guitarist and we both believe *Cancion de Amor* is perfect and indeed enhances our creative partnership on this record."

Eleanor and John first started chatting about recording an album together in some of their pre and posts stage chats over two years ago when John guested on some of Eleanor's live performance shows. They both loved how John's classical and Spanish influenced guitar styles worked with Eleanor's voice and while recording commenced soon after those initial conversations, the album was not completed.

Together with the title track, *Cancion de Amor*, the album features many other original songs including Bernadette McMahon's glorious *Child Of Mine* and the divine *Sand and Water* by Beth Chapman Nielsen together with a number of traditional arrangements some of which John has taken the lead including *The Cloths Of Heaven* and *The Immigrant's Song*. Others including *Siúil A Rún*, *My Bunny Light Horseman* and *Dumbarton's Drums* John and Eleanor arranged together. The ConTempo String Quartet also feature strongly on this album. Known so well not only in Ballinasloe and Co. Galway but also nationally, this quartet features just some of the musicians who enhance this album's beautiful sound.

Eleanor and John share a meeting of musical minds, loves and styles and out of this has come *Cancion de Amor*. It is a privilege to now be able to have this beautiful body of work born out of a unique and very special collaboration.

*Cancion de Amor* is available to buy from iTunes and also via prepaid mail order from [eleanorshanley.ie](http://eleanorshanley.ie) More information on sales outlets and other details will be announced soon. W. [eleanorshanley.ie](http://eleanorshanley.ie) | [johnfeeleyguitar.com](https://www.facebook.com/johnfeeleyguitar) | FB. @EleanorshanleyMusic | Insta. @EleanorShanleyMusic



BY LIAM COSGROVE

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Nollaig na mBan has become a popular fixture on our social calendar and it was celebrated last on Sunday, January 5th in Gullane's Hotel where ladies from town and country, young and old and in-between gathered for afternoon tea and entertainment and to carry on a tradition that is timeless.

Little did we know that day that a terrible cloud was already moving in to darken the new year and threaten all our normal lives and traditions. After first wave and second wave lockdowns and levels our sense of safety and security has been shaken and opportunities to meet our friends, neighbours and even relations have dwindled. With the recent announcement that a new vaccine is on the way, we can begin to hope again. Many will remember the earlier scourge of tuberculosis, scarlet fever, polio and diphtheria and how the gradual development of vaccines and programmes of mass vaccination put an end to all that misery.

Indeed in those years Dr Dorothy Stopford Price and Doctor Pearl Dunlevy were two of the great unsung women who contributed to this medical progress. And today we are also very proud of the work of local lady, Dr Catherine Motherway, ICU consultant in Limerick, who has been a very reassuring presence on television during the year.

But the organisers of the Nollaig na mBan event have decided that it is too soon and too risky to gather again so we have cancelled this year's event. We do hope that our supporters will meet in smaller groups within whatever restrictions and levels the government proposes at the time.

We would also like to acknowledge all the menfolk who got involved with serving the teas, music, dancing and story-telling and of course thank Thomas and Caroline Gullane who graciously sponsored the event each year. We wish all our supporters a very happy Christmas and a brighter happier and healthier new year.

Critically our Nollaig na mBan was also a fundraiser and all monies were sent to Kilconnell native Sr. Annette Farrell, who has been working to provide education to young girls in Dar as Salaam, Tanzania.

Sr Annette told us recently that while Tanzania had fewer covid infections and deaths than elsewhere, it still faces catastrophe due to the dire economic consequences. She wrote: 'When churches closed no local fundraising was possible. Our centre for children with disability depends a lot on the local church but collections

are down. Likewise where people have lost their jobs or small businesses they can't pay their school fees and we need the fees to pay the teachers. A lot of people come for food aid, rent and money for basic medicine. We try our best to help sick children and the old but we have to turn away more and more needy people because the funds are exhausted already. Here there is no such thing as a government handout: there is no dole, no old age pension nor children's allowance. A meal a day is normal if you are lucky - even for graduates - since there's little employment. For parents with several children every day is a struggle. That's our story in a nutshell. We share as far as we can and we pray'.

Should anybody want to help out Sr. Annette this year we hope that you will go online to subscribe to Friends of Holy Union Tanzania <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofHolyUnionTanzania/> This appeal was set up by Ms Éilis Tracy, Principal at Eyrecourt NS and Ms Agnes Hurley, both of whom have worked with Sr. Annette during previous summer holidays.

For now we could do worse than adopt the advice of poet and philosopher John O'Donohue:

*This is the time to be slow  
Lie low to the wall  
Until the bitter weather passes.  
Try, as best you can, not to let  
The wire brush of doubt  
Scrape from your heart  
All sense of yourself  
And your hesitant light.  
If you remain generous,  
Time will come good;  
And you will find your feet  
Again on fresh pastures of promise,  
Where the air will be kind  
And blushed with beginning.*



Sr. Annette Farrell addressing the gathering at the Nollaig na mBan festivities last year.

## EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE



Did you know that EU citizens can help shape EU policy with the European Citizens' Initiative?

**Here are our top tips:**

- 7 Citizens
- 7 Different Eu countries
- Register the initiative
- Collect 1m signatures
- The initiative will be presented to the European Commission and debated in the European Parliament
- Most recent successful initiative was #EndTheCage to propose a ban on caged farming.



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# NANCY & THE DOLLS

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Kilconnell-native and no stranger to music, song and theatre-Tom Campbell-has just launched his new single: "Searching".



Tom Campbell

It follows on some four years ago since he launched his debut 'OK Life' the album. He recalls that creative musical project as a great experience and he loved every minute of the journey it took him on: writing, collaborating, recording, mixing, CD design, publicity and performing. With a young family life made other demands on his time, but that nagging urge to challenge himself to create something new is a constant companion of Tom's.

"I discovered in my early songwriting years that inspiration and perspiration may be twins but in songwriting as with all creative endeavors inspiration is dominant. Without it, a struggle will ensue... guaranteed. Indeed even when it is present I expect a struggle but in a positive way" explains Tom.

The inspiration for the single 'Searching' came from a complex concept initially. "The idea that things we cherish in the here and now may shift with the winds of time and the fact that sometimes unwittingly in 'searching' for that new 'place' we leave 'treasures' behind and create new ones. In that inevitable process I speculate also on the values that remain constant" he muses.

Tom continues "I know... how do you go about putting that into a song that is less than three minutes, has a hook, a chorus and still be a thing people may want to listen to? 'Breath in and then breath out' was my lyrical response. The word 'Searching' only appears once but 'Breath in and then breath out' is repeated a number of times. It is in effect the lyrical hook".

He has written a number of songs since the last album release but as the new songs were being developed 'Searching' seemed to emerge as one that could stand alone as a single so he worked on an arrangement. Matt Hegarty came on board and applied his considerable talent to writing a bass line with presence. Dave Skelton the producer/mixer applied the finishing touches to the digital single.

"Songs, when working on them, take on a bit of a life of their own and early in the writing process things seemed to fall right for this one. Vibe is a curious thing, but 'Searching' seems to have it and I was very lucky to have Dave and Matt collaborating with me on this single" states Tom Campbell.

It is released on all digital music platforms and can be found and streamed at [Pulse160.com](http://Pulse160.com). Updates are posted on [facebook.com/pulse160](http://facebook.com/pulse160)





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Scaffolding erected, slates removed, roof damage repaired, felt underlay installed awaiting slaters to affix the old slates



Band Summer Recital outside Millrace Nursing Home.

Prompted by the success and reaction to their summer recitals at Nursing Homes, the Ballinasloe Town Band are determined to revisit the local nursing homes again, covid permitting, to safely deliver musical Christmas cheer to the residents and staff.

However, the opportunities for the Town Band to gather recently have been minimal. Bandmaster, Noel Madden, and Youth Band Director, Keith Kelly, took on the challenges imposed on large gatherings. They upskilled themselves on the use of online Zoom technology allowing different sections of both bands to go online, to engage and interact at set times twice a week to safely rehearse the Christmas collection of music, hymns and carols.

Observers of the renovations to the Band Hall will have noticed that the slates on the entire roof have been removed and in compliance with heritage requirements most of the original slates will be reused again. Other works within the hall are continuing – finalising heating, plumbing and electrical works with a view to completing the project by year end.

The "Raise the Roof Campaign" set a fundraising target of €50k. The campaign has now reached 80% of its target. The Band Committee are extremely grateful for the communities' generosity to date are hopeful that the remainder of slates are purchased, thereby securing funding for the repair and re-slating of the roof. "Slates" may still be purchased for €50 from any Band Member or

online through the Ballinasloe Town Band Facebook page or via the bands website: [www.ballinasloetownband.ie](http://www.ballinasloetownband.ie). They may make an ideal Christmas Gift for someone who can't come home this year! Enquiries to Martina 087 9710496

The Junior Band has continued to learn and practice throughout this difficult time for all youth activities. The junior members meet on Zoom to learn music theory and to learn about famous composers and musicians such as Mozart and the Beatles through music appreciation classes.

Each week the staff of the band send instructional videos to band members showing them how and what to practice on their instrument. The band members then record themselves playing the same exercises and get feedback from the teachers.

The band is also accepting new members through their "Virtual Introduction to Band" classes which focus on Rhythm sessions and some fundamental music theory. If you have a child from 8-12 years of age that is interested in learning about the band, now is a great time to contact us to find out more. You can do so at [www.ballinasloetownband.ie/join](http://www.ballinasloetownband.ie/join)

"On behalf of the Senior and Junior Band members, the Ballinasloe Town Band Committee wish to extend their warmest wishes to the people of Ballinasloe and their families over the coming festive season and hope the new year brings health and happiness to all," states Band Master Noel Madden.



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# FIRST LIBRARY - #COMICCONATHOME FESTIVAL SUCCESS



As with most events this year the Library's ComicCon went virtual and so #ComicConAtHome was born. The virtual event was hosted on the Library's Facebook page and on YouTube in late October.

Best-selling author Alan Nolan, taught everyone how to draw Spiderman and award-winning make-up artist Amanda Conlon turned herself into the Mad Hatter. For the older kids and teens Wayne O'Connor demonstrated how to be an illustrator with 'A brief history of digital art'. And all the way from Holland, the Superhero Scientist and big marvel fan, Barry W Fitzgerald, talked about his love of comic books and 'How to build an Ironman Suit'.

Pre Event the Library hosted a 'Design A Superhero' competition and received almost 200 entries. The judges had a hard job and decided to pick 20 winning entries, all of whom received a €20 ShopBallinasloe voucher.

4 winners Fiadh, Rory, Erin and Tori will have their entries made into postcards! And one special pre-schooler Jamie will receive a special gift of Superhero cape made locally by artist Amy Ui Neachtain!

If you are a comic book or graphic novel fan the library has one of the best collections in Ireland with books by our guest artists.

The crew are really looking forward to seeing all their friends in person again. When they hopefully open at Level 3, the Contact and Collect service will resume and people can start requesting books online for collection. When they get to Level 1 service users will be back into the Library but with certain conditions. Even during lockdown, there are staff to answer your email queries on (091) 509551 and you can drop books back in the drop box.

If you are not currently a Library member you can join online for free at [www.librariesireland.ie](http://www.librariesireland.ie) and start using the online



Erin Arru



Tori Kilkenny



Fiadh Finneran



Jamie Cahill



Rory Kelly

resources straight away. It's possible to access eBooks/EAudio books, magazines, newspapers, language courses. Free accredited courses in computing, writing etc., even in dog grooming, are also available.

The Ballinasloe Women's group who normally meet in the Library on Thursday mornings are now meeting on zoom. Great things are happening, they have been learning to crochet, how to make cheese and are looking forward to furniture decoration and poetry writing. Check out the Ballinasloe Women's Space Facebook page for more details.

"Stay tuned to our social media pages where we will keep you updated about competitions and fun events. We love to hear from you and we really miss you so stay in touch. We can't wait to see you all very soon" states Librarian Una Kelly.

BY LIAM COSGROVE

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### Junior Team

Back row L-R: Lauren Dooley, Ashling Doherty, Meave Bergin, Clare Egan, Lisa O'Neill, Niamh Kelly, Maeve Casey, Rhona Black, Emma Keane, Emma Mitchell. Front row L-R: Niamh Parker, Amie Hawkins, Niamh Loughnane, Lorraine Canavan, Aisling Brannelly, Shauna Mitchell, Eilish Kerr, Aine Hall, Niamh Prendergast. Missing from Photo: Emma Loughnane, Laura Gavin & Michelle Jennings.

Reviewing a shortened season all camogie teams including the U6s, U8s, U10s, U13s, U14s, U16s & Junior had as busy a run in these Pandemic times.

After a great unbeaten run of 3 wins from 3 games, the Juniors were narrowly beaten in the quarter final by a strong Westport Camogie side at home in Ardscoil Mhuire. Led by Alan Murphy & Michelle Kelly, the panel of women grew in confidence as the season went on but alas it wasn't to be.

Throughout August & September, the club took part in the very successful MNÁ Hurl with Me programme. The programme ran over a number weeks in conjunction with The Camogie Association and generously supported by Tesco Ireland. The final session culminated in a lively game and kindly refereed by Pat Harte.

The U6 and U8 teams took part in their first blitz in early September, both teams played very well against the opposition teams from Cappataggle in Ardscoil Mhuire.

October saw the launch of Cluiche Caoga 50/50 monthly draw. They have no doubt that the support the club lotto has enjoyed over the years will continue with this new venture. The draw takes place each month with a winner each time - No rollover, just a guaranteed winner. The monthly cost of the draw is €5, paid via standing order from your bank account, or an annual payment of €60. Those who sign up to a standing order will be rewarded with double entry in their first 2 draws.

Details will be available on the club Facebook page and will also be circulated to all teams and parents via the team communications channels.

They're always looking for new members, both players & adults willing to coach or help in any way.



MNA with me Hurling Team Susie & Heidi Comer, Michelle & Amy Clarke, Edel & Tyler Garvey, Nicola & Mia Casey, Marie & Katelyn Caulfield, Nikki Harte & Cedyra Kara, Barbara & Siofra Naughton with coaches Palmela & Aine Hall. Missing from Photo: Annmarie & Saidbh Waters, Annmarie & Isabella Fallon, Grace & Lauren Loughery



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Members of the Laurencetown "let's get active" committee at the launch of the 2021 programme at the MUGA pitch

For the fifth year in a row Laurencetown Community Development Group will be running a fantastic series of health and well-being initiatives, classes and talks. This year, like the rest of the world, will see a move to some online programmes too.

Starting the 11th January and running for 8 weeks it is a much-anticipated event. Currently the group are finalising the programme but it is ramping up to be another bumper year with some nice new additions to the line-up. There will be monthly events running after the initial 8 weeks also to allow the community to keep active throughout the year!

The usual walking and running programmes will be available, suiting all fitness levels from beginners to advance levels. Groups include a Buggy Brigade, Walkers and Talkers, Men On The Move, Couch to 5km and interval running.

Some of the most popular events from the last few years are making a comeback with hurling skills for children, women's and men's soccer skills, golfing, an active retirement day out, kids soccer tournament and a family climb day out. One of last year's highlights was the community cycle (Thanks to Ballinasloe Cycling Club and Barry's Cycle for brilliant guidance and advice) which saw a fantastic local group going from couch to 50km in a matter of weeks which was an amazing achievement. Cycling will be extended in 2021 to a 10 week "Axa Community Cycle" programme with various distance loops to suit all.

2021 newbies include on-line classes re spinning, kettlebells, mindfulness, nutrition and some at home work outs. A Laurencetown Heritage Trail Walk and a "Potential" Greenway Route Trail walk will get the walking shoes out. Also a fun "Honk the Horn" Bingo will be held at the end of January to get those number lovers out and about!!

This year the spotlight will be on the fantastic new walking track which is located at the back of the school in the village and

with that and the MUGA pitch combined they are the perfect base for activities. With this in mind a competition has been launched for anyone in the area to enter – all you have to do is create a DIY Fairyhouse – that can be pop along the walking track and you will be in with a chance of winning a host of prizes with the top three winners getting to choose from hotel vouchers, family dinners or a one for all voucher. Closing date is the 1st March 2021.

All events and activities will be following all the uptodate guidelines in relation to Covid19 and will be adhering to social distancing. Participants must register in advance for ALL activities.

To get the most up to date information and to see the full schedule of events log onto the facebook page [www.facebook.com/Lawrencetown-Community-Development-Group](http://www.facebook.com/Lawrencetown-Community-Development-Group). All from all surrounding areas are very welcome always!



Donnacha Treacy, Laura Pardy, Diarmuid & Cormac Treacy on the new walking track in Laurencetown which will be the focus for the upcoming 2021 "let's get active" programme

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# ROAD RUNNERS TAKE ON 'VIRTUAL OCTOBER'

BY AMY CROFFEY

Dozens of Ballinasloe Road Runners hit local roads over the October long weekend to take on the Dublin Marathon with a difference.

After a Level 5 Covid-19 lockdown was introduced a few days before the event, club members had to abandon the route they planned to run together in small, socially distanced groups. Instead participants ran solo or alongside one or two others to complete virtual full marathons (42.1km), half marathons (21.1km), and 10-kilometre runs within five kilometres of their homes. While there were no celebratory post-run drinks in An Tain, Brewery Lane, Gibbons and Downeys this year, Taoiseach Micheál Martin's restrictions could not dampen spirits.

Fatigued racers were given some much-needed moral support with beeps and shouts of encouragement from cars; some stood outside their homes or along roads to cheer runners on; while others left jellies and water out for those in need of some refreshments.

The Ballinasloe Road Runner (BRR) Facebook group was also a great source of encouragement, with club members tracking fellow runners' routes and whereabouts through the Dublin Marathon app. "The supporters along many routes of the run made my first marathon experience so enjoyable" Ola Dyszewska said. While fellow club member Brian Dolan, who also ran a full marathon, added: "It was great to see such comradery even in these unsettled times, the support and encouragement was just unbelievable and a true representation of BRR."

Over 13,000 runners across the country took part in the virtual KBC Dublin Marathon 2020 from October 24 to October 26. And while there were no medals awarded at the finish line, participants will receive one in the post later this year.

Although renowned for their Couch To 5K programme annually, Ballinasloe Road Runners is open to the community all year round. When not in lockdown, they train on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30pm, and Saturdays at 8am, or see their Facebook page for more information.



Some of the runners that took part in Virtual October:

- Top row:** Ola Dyszewska, Brian Dolan, Eilis Treacy, Antoinette Gallagher, Alan Harney
- 2nd row:** Margaret Connaughton, Phyllis Moran, Inga Venckute, Tracy Moore, Clare Madden
- 3rd row:** Martina Keighery, Billy Reynolds, Brenda Smith, Fionnuala Mulryan
- 4th row:** Patricia Devlin, Oliver Coffey, Carmel O'Brien, Eric Naughton, Brendan Boland
- 5th row:** Breda Arru, Fiona Mitchell, Kitty Tuohy, Denise Boland, Vicky Costello

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Club Chairperson of Ballinasloe Town A. F. C. Joby Kelly.

The town under-16 team, managed by James Kinsella and Jason Campbell, had an emphatic victory in the Roscommon and district league divisional cup final easily defeating Skyvalley Rovers on a 6-0 score line.

Played before the current round of Covid restrictions, "the town" secured the victory after Conor Dowd completed a brilliant performance by scoring 4 goals while Eoin Connell and Diarmuid McDonagh scored 1 goal each. The management team were full of praise for each and every member of the panel who had given 100% effort and dedication to the cause over the season.

The majority of our club underage teams have been entered this season into

the Galway and District Youth League which has been postponed until December due to Covid-19. However, under current Covid guidelines all underage teams can still train on a weekly basis at the clubs "Curragh Grounds".

The club are extremely proud of the achievements of our former player Heather Payne, who started off her soccer career in the Ballinasloe under 10s street league. On October the 23rd Heather was the "player of the match" when the Irish senior ladies team took on Ukraine away in the Euro qualifiers. Unfortunately, Ireland were beaten 1-0 on the day. The game was televised live on RTE2 and Heather received rave reviews.

### Chairperson Joby Kelly wins prestigious award.

Club chairperson Joby Kelly was recently nominated by parents within our club for the Gala Inspiration Awards 2020, celebrating the achievements of people whose incredible efforts have had a real impact on our communities. Joby recently received the great news that he had been selected as a winner of the award. "Our Club committee and everyone associated with Ballinasloe Town AFC are extremely proud of his achievement and it was a well-deserved award in recognition of the tremendous effort he puts into our club on a regular basis" stated Club Development Coordinator, Johnny Walsh.

### Club complete development works.

The club has just completed the latest stage of club development works at the Curragh Grounds, chiefly upgrading the main pitch floodlight system and purchase of the new drive on pitch mower.

For the past 35 years the club have been constantly developing new facilities and enhancing existing facilities on the Curragh grounds. The next stage will begin after Christmas consisting of upgrading of the AstroTurf pitch, fencing and floodlights.

The club are currently in the process of collecting club photographs and memorabilia which will be displayed at the recently constructed new clubhouse. Anyone that may have any items of interest can contact any club committee member or Michael Riddell.



Pictured after winning the under 16 Final after a 6 nil defeat of Sky Valley Rovers are the victorious Ballinasloe Town team with managers James Kinsella and Jason Campbell.

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The Christmas Illuminations Project is run by the Ballinasloe Town Team under the umbrella of BACD Ltd. Funding has been received towards the project from Galway Rural Development, Galway County Council, Ballinasloe Credit Union & Local Business Contributions & Sponsorship.



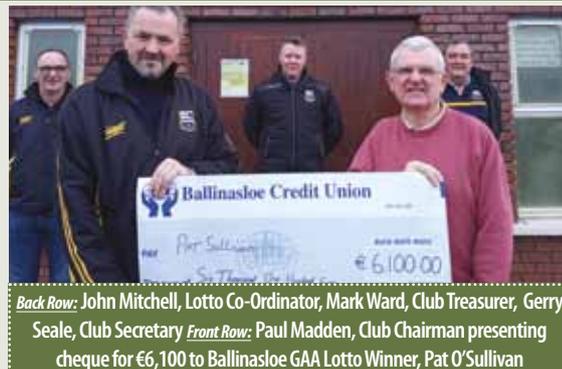
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## GAA CLUB LOTTO €6,000 WINNER

BY LIAM COSGROVE

Congratulations to Pat O'Sullivan, former Club Chairman and still an active member, who won the GAA Lotto Jackpot this November. "Well done Pat and many thanks to you and all who support the Lotto, which at the moment is the only income stream for our Club" stated Paul Madden, Chairman.

Pat, a Limerick native, moved to town in the mid seventies as a National Teacher with St. Grellan's before retiring as Principal of Aughrim N.S. a few years ago. He lives with his wife Jenny in Kilgarve and has been very active in many sporting and cultural organisations in the locality as well as being a longtime supporter and public representative of Fianna Fail, serving as Town Councillor, Mayor of Ballinasloe and County Councillor, with distinction. The Lotto can be played online at [www.ballinasloe.gaa.ie](http://www.ballinasloe.gaa.ie) Join our next Lotto by logging on to the website and play a single week or avail of multiple weeks option to make sure you don't miss out. Remember, "if you're not in, you can't win." The current jackpot is €3,000 and is drawn every Friday night.



Back Row: John Mitchell, Lotto Co-Ordinator, Mark Ward, Club Treasurer, Gerry Seale, Club Secretary Front Row: Paul Madden, Club Chairman presenting cheque for €6,100 to Ballinasloe GAA Lotto Winner, Pat O'Sullivan



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## 1980 – ST. GRELLAN'S MEMORABLE TRIP TO TIPP

This year, 2020, marks the 40th Anniversary of Ballinasloe Senior Footballers reaching an All-Ireland Club Final. The Club had been County Champions from 1913 to 1919 and again from 1922 to 1930. It was in 1925 that Galway won its first All-Ireland Final, with twelve Ballinasloe footballers on the side. The club had another run of success with wins in 1939, 1944 and 1946.

The club had success in Juvenile and Minor Championships during the 50's without making the breakthrough at Senior Level during a 33 year long famine. A Juvenile and Minor Championship was won in 1972 and 1974 respectively under the management of William Goode RIP, Tony Broderick, Mattie Ganly RIP and Johnny Kilcommins. These underage players provided the basis for the club's only U-21 success in 1977 under Martin Ryan, John Molloy and Willie Tully.

The 1979 team was made up of youth and experience, many of the players had played underage the previous years and were led by the experienced Willie Devlin, Barry Brennan, Joe Kelly, Pat Cunningham, John Manton, Johnny Whelan and Co. The arrival of Eamon Flanagan, Colm Loftus and Paul McGettigan proved immense as they dovetailed into the club set-up. McGettigan had already had a stellar career with Donegal minors and seniors.

Having won the County Final against Dunmore following a replay, St. Grellan's commenced their Connacht Championship campaign on Sunday 18th November 1979 against Leitrim Champions, Ballinamore, with a final Score of 1-12 to 2-05.

The club's first ever Connacht Club Senior Football Final appearance against St. Mary's of Sligo was held in Markievicz Park on the 2nd December 1979. At the full time whistle the sides were all square at 4 points each and the replay was fixed for The Duggan Park on the 10th February, a dry day and the renowned surface of "The Duggan" was perfect for fast, flowing football.

The sudden passing of Fred Jennings, a St. Grellan's clubman and a member of the Duggan Park Committee, in the week prior to the replay, was acknowledged with a minute's silence just before throw-in.

Our team, particularly their forwards, were known to be lighter and pacier than their opponents and when they were in possession they were doing well but the more physical Sligo players certainly were able to make their presence felt.

Neither teams "did not lack sideline support". Scores were tit-for-tat in the first half until just before the break the opposition scored two points on the trot and went into the dressing room 0-5 to 0-3 ahead.

St. Grellan's emerged from the dressing rooms full of vigour and began to dominate on all areas of the pitch going 0-9 to 0-5 ahead.

At this point, with just seven minutes to go, St. Grellan's supporters must have felt they were home and dry but their hearts must have missed a beat or two as St. Mary's fired over 3 points in succession. The final whistle was a huge relief as the final scored ended at 0-9 to 0-8 and for the Ballinasloe were crowned Connacht Senior Club Football Champions in their own TOWN !

It was The Duggan Park that hosted the All-Ireland Semi-Final against Offaly and Leinster Champions Walsh Island on 9th May. The opposition, with the famous Offaly player Matt Connor and seven of his clan, one brother and six cousins on their team sheet, went in as favourites having been beaten in the All-Ireland Club semi-final the previous year and came to Ballinasloe with a point to prove.

It was a close game and the teams exchanged scores to level the game on no less than three times. With just minutes to full time the sides were level again and the result could have gone either way. St. Grellan's drove in wide after wide, with locals looking in angst, but with three quick points in succession they scrambled over the line with a final score of 1-11 to 1-08.

Goalkeeper Willie Devlin was struck down with a bad dose of flu. On the morning of the game, not having fully recovered, a mentor fortified him with a little drop of "medicine", created in a famous Cork distillery, before the game and again at half time, Devlin took his place between the posts and was instrumental in the win.

25th of May saw another historic first, against a much fancied St. Finbarrs, Cork and Munster Champions in the All-Ireland Senior Club Football Final played in a Munster venue, Tipperary Town, with a Munster referee, Kerryman – the famous Weeshie Fogarty.

The resurgence of the St. Grellan's team lay in the approach of their manager, P.B. Ryan, RIP, together with his selectors William Goode RIP and Joe Whelan RIP, they prepared this team both mentally and physically with methods that were ahead of their time. Often they trained by car lights in the Duggan !! At the time, PB stated that "despite the slump in previous years, the club had nurtured a profitable youth policy". By 1979, Ryan had honed a fine County Championship winning team.



**Ballinasloe Senior County & Connacht Football Champions 1979**

*Back Row Left to Right:* W. Goode (Selector), T. Philips, S. Brennan, P. Keighery, B. Dolan, K. Barrett, J. Menton, E. Flanagan, W. Devlin, B. Brennan, M. Cunningham, J. Cawley, K. Mitchell, P.B. Ryan (Manager), J. Whelan (Selector).

*Front Row Left to Right:* G. Gibbons, G. Salmon, J. Whelan, J. Colbert, J. Coughlan, P. McGettigan, J. Kelly (Capt), S. Riddle, N. Jennings, J. Boswell, P. Cunningham, C. Loftus, Mascot (T. Devlin)



**St. Grellans Football Club 79/80 Squad Reunion held on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 1999 in Haydens Hotel**

*Back Row Left to Right:* G. Salmon, G. Keane, N. Tierney, D. Coughlan, B. Dolan, T. Brennan. *Middle Row L-R:* J. Kilcommins, C. Loftus, K. Arnold, B. Brennan, E. Flanagan, M. Brennan, C. Watters, M. Cunningham, W. Devlin, P. Ryan, J. Whelan, J. Creavin, N. Jennings, K. Barrett, J. Coughlan, K. Mitchell. *Front Row L-R:* G. Gibbons, P. Keighery, P. Cunningham, M. Coughlan, W. Goode, Rev. P. Bruen, P.B. Ryan, J. Kelly, J. Boswell, P. McGettigan.

derailed by Milltown in 1981.

The panel on the day and over the next two years were: Willie Devlin, Noel Jennings, Joe Kelly, Joe Boswell, Kevin Mitchell, Eamon Flanagan, Pat Cunningham, Barry Brennan, Paul McGettigan, Michael Cunningham, John Manton, Godfrey Gibbons, Sean Riddell, Colm Loftus, Johnny Whelan. Subs: Michael Brennan, Liam Whyte RIP, Johnny Coughlan, Sean Brennan, Gerry Salmon, Peadar Ryan, Thomas Brennan, Johnny Colbert, Brendan Dolan, Ciaran

On 25th May 1980 St. Grellan's team, together with their huge band of supporters, decamped to the Tipp venue, some 2,500 was estimated in the crowd. It was a game that 'Barr's, Jimmy Barry Murphy, lined out at corner forward, dominated from the beginning and effectively won the title for his squad.

Ballinasloe dominated for the first 20 minutes, but despite this the Cork side lead 1-5 to 0-4 at the interval. Wind turned to rain during the half-time break and devastating Cork goals gave a final score line of 3-09 to 0-8.

Within weeks the lads dusted themselves down, going on to win the next year's County Senior Championship against Corofin on September 6th 1980. Their 3-in-a-Row aspirations were then

Barrett, Jack Coughlan, John Creaven, Des Coughlan, Christy Watters, John Cawley, Niall Tierney, Gregory Keane, Peter Keighrey RIP.

Mary Coughlan, sister of Jack and Des, was the first female officer in the history of the club. Mary, together with Chairman William Goode RIP and Treasurer Kieran Barrett kept the show on the road during those heady – glory days.

What memories were made! There have been many great days since but as we remember the many great days of football played in the late 70's and early 80's we acknowledge the achievements of all those involved in this, the 40th Year after the Trip to Tipp.



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# DOUBLE CONNACHT GOLF CHAMPIONS

BY MICHAEL S. KELLY

Ballinasloe Golf Club were in the privileged position of having two teams involved in the Connacht Cups and Shield Finals weekend played in Athlone Golf Club. After years of disappointments and near misses Ballinasloe enjoyed success in both competitions for the first time ever in the history of the club.

Ballinasloe captured the Connacht Junior Cup title by beating Galway Bay Golf Club in the final by 3 matches to 2. The Junior Cup panel consisted of Aaron Leonard, Fergus Finneran, Pádraig Ryan Jnr, Jamie Corbett, Ciaran Smyth, Charlie Mooney, Tom Cafferkey, Mark Conneely, Alan McGuire and Liam Coughlan. On the road to the final the club had victories over Loughrea, Roscommon and Enniscrone. The team management of Aiden Dooley and Mattie Curley said that the panel was a combination of youth & experience and winning the title was an historic achievement for the Club.

The Jimmy Bruen panel had to overcome strong opposition from Athlone, Portumna and Westport to get to the final. In the final against Athenry Ballinasloe were victors by 3.5 to 1.5. The panel consisted of Jamie Corbett, Michael Corbett, Ciaran Smyth, Declan Murphy, Pádraig Ryan Jnr, Charlie Mooney, Fergus Finneran, Declan Flannery, Tom Cafferkey, Mark Conneely, Edwin Flynn, Liam Coughlan, Aaron Leonard, Kevin Cunniffe, Alan McGuire and Hugh Killeen. The Team Captains are Mike Barrett and Jack Coughlan.

John Hurley, Club Captain said "I am very proud of our teams historic achievements to date and on behalf of the members of Ballinasloe Golf Club, I would just like to wish the best of luck to everyone involved with our newly crowned Connacht Champions Junior Cup & Jimmy Bruen teams for the All Ireland Finals in Donegal where they play Castletroy from Limerick and Berehaven from Cork in the All Ireland semi-finals early next year".



First Connacht Title for Jimmy Bruen Team



The Jimmy Bruen panel

Front row l-r: Liam Coughlan, Jamie Corbett, Ciaran Smyth, Aaron Leonard, Second row: Tom Cafferkey, Kevin Cunniffe, Jack Coughlan, Mike Barrett, Declan Flannery, Pádraig Ryan Jnr. Back row: Alan McGuire, Hugh Killeen, Michael Corbett, Fergus Finneran, Charlie Mooney, Declan Murphy, Mark Conneely.



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Historic First Title Win for Junior Cup Team



The Junior Cup panel

Front row l-r: Tom Cafferkey, Liam Coughlan, Mattie Curley, Aiden Dooley, Ciaran Smyth, Aaron Leonard. Back row Jamie Corbett, Alan McGuire, Fergus Finneran, Charlie Mooney, Mark Conneely, Pádraig Ryan Jnr.

## A GOLF POEM

*In My Hand I Hold A Ball,  
White And Dimpled, And Rather Small.  
Oh How Bland It Does Appear,  
This Harmless Looking Little Sphere.  
By Its Size I Could Not Guess,  
The Awesome Strength It Does Possess.  
My Life Has Not Been Quite The Same,  
Since I Chose To Play This Stupid Game.  
It Rules My Mind For Hours On End,  
A Fortune It Has Made Me Spend.  
It Has Made Me Curse And Made Me Cry,  
And Hate Myself And Want To Die.  
It Promises Me A Thing Called Par,  
If I Hit It Straight And Far.  
To Master Such A Tiny Ball,  
Should Not Be Very Hard At All.  
But My Desires The Ball Refuses,  
And Does Exactly As It Chooses.  
It Hooks And Slices, Dribbles And Dies,  
And Disappears Before My Eyes.  
Often It Will Have A Whim,  
To Hit A Tree Or Take A Swim.  
With Miles Of Grass On Which To Land,  
It Finds A Tiny Patch Of Sand.  
It's Made Me Whimper Like A Pup,  
And Swear That I Will Give It Up.  
And Take To Drink To Ease My Sorrow,  
But The Ball Knows... I'll Be Back Tomorrow.*

- A recent study found the average golfer walks about 900 miles a year.
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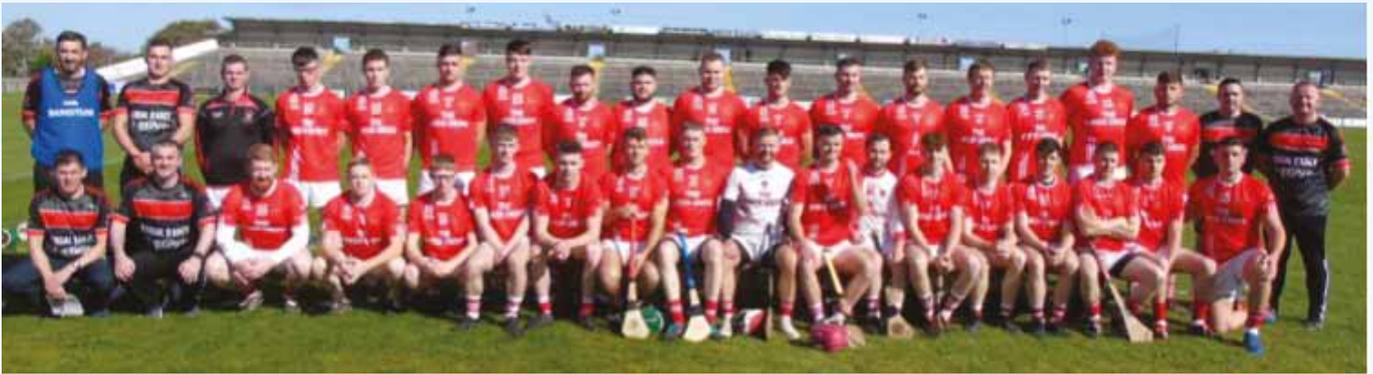
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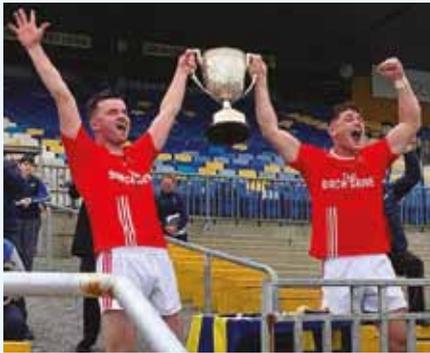
## 4<sup>TH</sup> CO. HURLING TITLE FOR PEARSES



Thirty six years after Pearses' first togged out in a Senior County Hurling Championship, and secured victory, the South Roscommon Club defied the odds and took the spoils of victory in a tense Final, that went to extra time, and the drama of a man down, against Athleague on a scoreline of 2-22 to 1-18.

Captained by Paul Dolan and Eoin Costelloe, the side had the rub of the Gods in the qualifying stages, surviving 3 late goals against St. Dominick's, and dodging a missed free against Tremane in the semi-final.

A youthful squad managed by Shane Sweeney saw the side honour the efforts and dedication of those early 80 hurlers, the likes of James Costelloe, Johnny Johnson, Gerry Burke RIP, captained by Tom Shaughnessy and trained by the legendary Brian "Bunty" Kelly RIP.



The celebrations on this occasion were subdued with no heros welcome permitted to club house but it did not prevent Manager Shane from reflecting on an epic adventure as his first time at the helm.

"Firstly I have to thank

and acknowledge the effort and spirit of all the lads in the squad and the hard work and support put in: my team – Tom Corbett and Derek Frehill (Mentors), Paraic Kelly (Strength and Conditioning Coach), Adrian Murphy Selector/Trainer, Gerry Reilly Physio and our most loyal assistant Aiden "Fred" Bergin" said Shane.

The Club last won the County Hurling title in 2017, when they came tops out of 7 senior clubs and want to acknowledge the huge support they got from sponsors Alan Naughton of N6 Motors, Fergal Darcy of Today FM, Ambrose Cuddy, Solicitors, The Moycarn Lodge and Patrick Finneran D4.

"Our guest trainers, Paul Kilgannon and Eamon Cleary are deserving of praise as all the officers of the Club, the Committees, our supporters and especially the Camogie Committee who supplied and masterminded our resources and refreshments "states Shane.

Co-captain Eoin Costello managed to stop the domestic squabbling when he matched his father's County medals at two-dad Tom was on the victorious teams of '84 and '87!

The wing back on the day reflected on how the panel were thrilled that the old war horses like the Dolan Brothers, Paraic and David –

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15 years at senior, Cathal Kelly– some 16 years and Mike Donaghue, the Elder Ashwielder of the team–all played such a role in the final.

“It was a strange 12 month year with a lot of lads having to train alone and then during the summer months we had 11 fellas out of a panel of 25 travelling back regularly from as far as Waterford for training – which gives an idea of their commitment and dedication” explains Eoin.

“We got short changed with the celebrations a bit, so it is giving us more hunger to knuckle down and focus on winning title five next year which is our new ambition” declared the Co-captain.



## STUDY CENTRE CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARY



Just five months after opening as a new business the first COVID lock closed the premises. Extensive renovations to the upstairs of the premises had begun and a full

house of secondary and college students, along with courses running and new courses were all booked.

Celebrating their one year anniversary in November their care for all students has shone through and given them a great following. “When you really care about your students and look after those who come to us, a return is natural, and we cannot thank everyone who has trusted in us and returned time

and again for courses, advice and help” stated Ruth Sheridan, proprietor.

As well as offering student supervised evening study, Leaving Certificate revision courses and grinds, new Manual Handling and many construction related health and safety courses along with a first aid courses, including their every popular paediatric first aid, have grown in popularity. A range of computer and social media beginner courses will start next year.

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Proprietor Ruth Sheridan Cregg in one of the training rooms at the Study Centre

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Pól Ó Duibhir

I was thrilled to see Ken Kelly's article on the drowning of Patrick Dwyer in the last issue of Ballinasloe Life. Patrick was my uncle and it was only well into my adventure in chasing up my family history that I found out the real story. My cousin Colette had a family version that involved Patrick out on a lake in a boat with mixed company. In her version he stripped off and dived into the water but the boatman would not

let him back into the boat because of the presence of the ladies. Not quite, but nearly, true and it set me off chasing up this dramatic event.

Ken has described the event in great detail and we are both fortunate that the Connacht Tribune of the day recorded the minutiae of the inquest and invested their report with great emotion. As I read the report I was hanging on every word and got a great shock when I read that my granda, Patrick's father, and Patrick's eldest brother were present at the inquest. My granda clearly had steam coming out his ears and informed the assembly that his son's life had been sacrificed for the modesty of two women. Not, in his opinion, a fair deal or anything like it.

Now, Patrick, Uncle Paddy, is not my only connection with this area. There are, or were, lots of Kellys in Clontuskert, but I am interested in just two of them, the brothers Michael and Tom. They ended up marrying two sisters, my father's sisters Bea and Nora.

Michael married Bea and opened a hardware shop in Tullow. Both Bea and Nora were dressmakers and Nora was taken into the business. Tom was a barman in Glasgow and on a trip home rescued Nora, and whisked her off to Glasgow and married her. After returning to Dublin, Tom in his later years became a barman in the Olympia theatre and trained in the legendary Maureen Grant. A family story held it that Kelly's Bar in that theatre was named after him. It is now Maureen's bar, named after her, and was never his – it had been named after another Kelly entirely.



Nora, meanwhile, continued her dressmaking and when I visited as a young boy she used to make the best chips in Dublin in my honour. So my visits were eagerly welcomed by the rest of the family.

Unfortunately, I have had four drownings in the family, including Patrick. My grandfather drowned in the Liffey in 1918. His brother, who was in the British Army, drowned in India in 1892; while a cousin went down in the Tipperary, in the Battle of Jutland in 1916. My friends tell me to stay out of the water!

Pól Ó Duibhir (Paul O'Dwyer).

*Pól Ó Duibhir is a retired civil servant living in Dublin. Since his retirement he has been following up his family and local history. He was sent a copy of the article in Ballinasloe Life by Damian Mac Con Uladh, a Ballinasloe native living in Greece. Pól's website is "photopol.com"*



The Irish House – Mrs. Finnegan's Drapers where Patrick was apprenticed. The AIB now stands on that corner.  
[Photo: via Damian Mac Con Uladh from the Lawrence Collection NLI]

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## THE NAMES ON OUR STREETS



So as the last snag lists of the largest ever investment in the streetscape of the town, since Clancarty's Town Commissioners became the first town West of the Shannon to have its own Gas Lighting in 1842, (a year after its first meeting in Craigs Hotel; Main St) – just how did we get the street names we have ?

The earliest references we have to the street names are the first series Ordnance Survey maps, produced in 1838-39. Earlier maps of the town did show streets but not their names.

The first edition OS maps were in colour and reveal a huge amount of details that even extended to the layout of large gardens. According to this map, town centre had three principal streets, namely: Main Street, Dunlo Street and Soldiers' Row (now Society Street). According to the 1837 colour map, the "Old Barrack" was to the rear of the old Scoil Iosif NS, which is probably why Society Street is marked as "Soldier's Row", renamed Society Street after the Agricultural Society Hall (Town Hall) opened in 1846.

Reference has been found to a birth of a boy called Lynch at "Waterloo, Ballinasloe" in 1862. And another reference from 1871 saying Society Street was also known as "Waterloo" (in 1871). Minor streets included, Tea Lane (now Jubilee), Church Hill, Bridge

Street (where the old UDC office was/ Simon Centre now), River Street (around Ballinasloe Castle), Church Street (around the then Connaught District Lunatic Asylum).

The next available map is the 1891 25-inch OS map, which contains a lot more street names, many of which are familiar today, including Dunlo Street, Dunlo Hill, Society Street, Market Square, Church Hill, Church Lane (now Duggan Avenue), Brackernagh, Harbour Lane, Tea Lane, Rutledge's Lane (the entrance to what was Hayden's Flats/now Dunlo Court), Piper's Lane (directly opposite entrance to old Planet nite club. Mentioned in newspaper reports, 1910-1936, The Kennel (or Kennels) (located roughly at the southern entrance to present-day St Michael's Place), Well Lane (SVDP Retail Store and Murray's house, Jubilee Street), Reeves's Lane (now Davitt Place), Paradise Row (lane behind current location of the Post Office), Woodslip (to the right of Keller's shop on Main Street), Hopson's Lane (to the left of Grenham's bar, Main Street), Bolgers Lane – along the River Chanel, Brewery Yard (situated on site of current apartments of the same name).

Iver's Lane (behind Wood's shop, Main Street, also called Wood's Lane) was named after William Ivers (1805-1885), so it should be Ivers' Lane. He was a merchant and local nationalist politician, member of the Board of Guardians and Town Commissioners, and of the Land League. He owned the shop (or a portion of it) that is now Woods. His nephew-in-law, Edward Gallagher, was found guilty of his manslaughter after the two had an argument. Bolger's Lane (now commonly known as Duane's Archway), Bridge Street, River Street, Church Street.

Other names that have surfaced in birth, marriage, death records but not very clear which alleys or lanes they now refer to including: Rigney's Row (1906): Rutherford Sproule, grandfather of poet and writer Eoghan Ó Tuairisc died here.

Haymarket Street: a name that surfaces almost exclusively in British Army records, especially in service records for men who signed up to fight in World War One. Most likely Tea Lane and the surrounding area.

Ussher's Lane (1890s), O'Brien's Lane (1886), Wilson's Lane (1911), Market Hill (1888), Garden (1901) named on a birth certificate, Canal View (1919): named in British Army records  
Horan's Lane, Wilson's Lane, Behan's Lane and Hopkin's Lane are all

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named on 1901 census, as is "Hobson's" (Hopson's) Lane, as were Newtowngaffy (1901): named on 1901 census as an alternative name for The Kennel. Victoria Street named on 1901 census, formerly Church Lane, now Duggan Avenue

Lanes were usually named after the surname of the family living in the first house on them. That being the case, some names changed as the top family changed. Most of the lanes off the principle streets were dilapidated slums by the mid-1930s. With the construction of St Brendan's, St Grellan's and later St Michael's and St Joseph's, these slums were cleared and their names fell into disuse.

Many streets bore nicknames rather than their actual names. Interestingly, all have to do with war. These are Waterloo (for Soldier's Row/Society Street), Burma Road (for Harris Road, named so as use of the actual Burma Road, which links Burma with China, was restored in 1945 by the Allies after World War II. The Opening of the Burma Grill reinforced use of unofficial name, which is named after Matt Harris (1826-1890), Land Leaguer and Home Rule MP. June 1944 – was when the moniker started.

Gaza Strip (for MacNeven Avenue [named after Aughrim-born William James MacNeven (1763-1841), United Irishman and known as the Father of American Chemistry]. Michael McCullagh claims this road was nicknamed the Gaza Strip as Gaza was in the news when it was being built, along with the Emerald Ballroom in the 1960s.

From the UDC minute book we learn that in 1931 the Town surveyor JL Dunne requests renaming "strange names" in the town, like The



Kennels, Piper's Lane and Paradise Row.

12 years later, in June 1943, a local remaining committee is set up which proposes "names be in Irish to perpetuate the memory of prominent Irishmen or women." Mentions that Society St comes from Show Society, Victoria Street from Queen Victoria and Dunlo Street from the old name of the town and one of Clancarty's titles (Lord Dunlo), Fr Hughes, Adm, and Fr P. Greaney, Garbally are naturally involved. Changes would mark the 50th anniversary of a very active Conradh na Gaeilge. New names proposed included Duggan, Hogan, Mellows, Sarsfield, Hymany, Emmet.

September 1943: Conradh na Gaeilge branch argues a majority of residents on Victoria Street agree to change name to Duggan Avenue (after the Clonfert Bishop, who was keenly supportive of the fledgling GAA in the 1880s). A Petition was drawn up and in December 1943 a Motion at UCD to change names of Victoria Street and Harbour Lane passed and in September 1944 the Minister gave permission to UDC to change names.

Naturally there has to be a row and in October 1944 opinions differ on whether new street names should be in Irish, English or bilingual.

January 1945: Conradh na Gaeilge branch demands all signs be in Irish only. In February of that year it's noted that bilingual signs will cost 7s 6d to 3 pounds each. Town Clerk told to order Irish plates only. Tadhg Mac Lochlainn of Conradh proposes the name Harris Road for Burma Road. Unanimously adopted.

April 1945: Conradh sends proposed names to Irish experts for checking and bill arrives in July for £36 – there is consternation at the costs. In September 1945, after winning in the sweeps, Tadhg Mac Lochlainn says he'll pay for new signs to include Harris Road, Davitt's Terrace, Emmet Terrace, Duggan Avenue.

In April 1946: 13 street signs are erected as the Town's Councillors wish to obtain some national publicity.

26 May 1946. Feis Bhreandain was one of the Conradh's annual events. Sean Og Mac Gearailt, president of Conradh, unveiled the signs in the presence of TDs' Paddy Beegan, Mark Killilea and Michael Donnellan. Ballinasloe was the first town in Ireland to have all-Irish street signs. "A welcome change from the old practice of naming streets after the loyal servants of England" noted a journal of the time reported and Taoiseach Eamon De Valera wrote a special letter of commendation.

Wheel forward to the modern day and Sli na Abhainn was the best the old Urban could come up with in the early 80s for the inner relief road, Marina Point North of it. Most of the Estates named during the Celtic Tiger era reflected geographical features rather than historic people.

There is no street or lane dedicated to any woman – even though perhaps there were many from different facets of life where nominations could be found – St. Theresa's Park perhaps the only heroine to adorn a name plate.

The last public street (as opposed to a residential estate) demised is the little known slip road between Brackernagh and Ard Mhuire which was dedicated by the Town Council in the late noughties to the memory of John "Tull" Dunne – one of the Town's and Galway's noted GAA Player and Administrator.

If you can share any light on some of these old names please make contact with the Editor.

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The man who sold the coat was born in 1862 the youngest of thirteen children of a Presbyterian farming family in County Leitrim. They traced their origins back to a Williamite soldier from the South of England who was given a grant of land in the 1690s in return for military service in the war against King James. At the age of 15 John Wood was apprenticed to a draper in Tullamore. When his five-year apprenticeship ended he went to live with and work for his sister Emily in Westport; her young husband Robert Edge had died of tuberculosis; she was left with

two children and a drapery business about which she knew very little. After Wood's nephew, Willie Edge, had served his time to the drapery trade he returned home to join his mother in the Westport shop. At last Wood felt free to think about setting up on his own. He visited many towns and eventually chose Ballinasloe because of its central location, as well as its rail and canal connections.

In 1885, with £100 in his pocket, Wood opened a small shop in Main Street, where at present the Credit Union offices are located, and here he was joined by his mother and sister Agnes who was crippled with rheumatoid arthritis. (Our photograph shows the street as it would have looked when Wood arrived in town). Within a few years the business had grown so much that he was able to move further up the street to a larger house and premises that still bear his name. James Nixon, one of his employees, took over the original shop, which remained in the Nixon family for several decades after Wood himself had retired.

The Leitrim man was soon one the biggest employers of labour in the town; he opened a footwear shop next door on the other side of Iver's Lane, and also started a tailoring and dressmaking business, putting London cutters in charge of each. At the same time he became the first trader outside the main cities of Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Galway to go personally to London to buy stock; this he did four times a year; he also went twice a year to Manchester, Luton and Nottingham to purchase cotton goods, hats, lace and hosiery.

In January 1900, John Wood married Martha Sparks of Armagh.

It was the Country Fair Day in Ballinasloe, a date traditionally set aside for matchmaking. The scene: Bracken's pub in Dunlo Street. Negotiations had been protracted but amicable, and at last a dowry was agreed. Suddenly the girl loudly declared for all to hear that she would rather drown herself in the Suck than marry her proposed bridegroom. Drinkers at the bar choked on their pints as a stunned silence descended on the company. When the boy's father eventually mastered his rage sufficiently to speak, he vehemently protested that he had not brought his son to town to be publicly humiliated, and demanded monetary compensation for the broken deal.

Someone helpfully suggested the price of a new overcoat. After a share of humming and hawing the aggrieved father reluctantly consented to the proposal, but, he stipulated, it would have to be a quality garment "not a Martin Henry from a cheap jack stall in the Square", something he wouldn't be ashamed to wear as he drove the trap to mass of a Sunday. And so the formerly contracting parties betook themselves to John Wood's of Main Street where bruised feelings were greatly assuaged by the purchase of a magnificent topcoat that made the wearer an object of envy next morning in his home parish.



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The couple had five children of whom all but one survived to adulthood. His family enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle with month-long summer holidays in either Salthill or Bray. At their disposal was an extensive flower and vegetable garden, besides lawns for tennis and croquet, all tended by a full-time gardener. For their primary education the children attended a fee-paying school in Mountpleasant that had replaced the Presbyterian National School, and afterwards were sent to boarding schools in Belfast. Wood became one of the first in Ballinasloe to own a private motor car when in 1911 he bought a silver-grey Napier, which was commandeered by the police during the 1916 Rebellion to bring food supplies to the town.

Despite being a devout Presbyterian, teetotaler and Ballinasloe's most successful businessman, Wood was blackballed when he applied for membership of the local golf club. Why? Because he was "in trade" and therefore not a gentleman. It was only when Lord Clancarty forcefully intervened on his behalf that he was eventually admitted.

After the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State took office in January 1922 the part of the country under its jurisdiction was without a statutory police force except for Dublin where the DMP had been retained. The RIC had in effect been stood down and the new administration was experiencing formidable difficulties in organizing the Civic Guards who did not have a presence in Ballinasloe until the end of the following September. In the meantime conditions of lawlessness prevailed with pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty forces squaring up to each other, while ordinary criminals had free rein. Wood became concerned for his family's safety and gave one of his daughters a Derringer pistol for her personal protection.

Events would show that his fears were well-grounded. He narrowly escaped death one night when he opened a window to investigate the sound of someone moaning beneath the archway. A shot rang out, the bullet striking the window frame close to his head. At daybreak a pool of blood was discovered in the laneway, but the mysterious victim had disappeared. On another occasion an attempted break-in was foiled by the vigilance of his staff. The windows of the shoe shop were smashed in another incident and all the stock on display was stolen. Afterwards Wood was heard to comment that the thieves would have little to show for their trouble since the boots and shoes they had taken were all odd ones. A more serious event occurred in April when a bomb was thrown through the shop window, landing directly below the bedroom where Wood and his wife were sleeping. Luckily the device was home-made and failed to explode. Later that night a party of armed men called, ostensibly to protect the premises. Having requested tea and something to eat, they slept for a few hours on the living-room floor before departing without disclosing their identity.

During the Civil War the family's sleep was again disturbed on

the night of 19th July when an eight-man Free State patrol was ambushed as it passed the entrance to Hopson's Lane. Nineteen-year-old Private James Hartigan of Ennistymon was mortally wounded by a grenade that injured several of his comrades. Also around this time, as part of the so-called Belfast Boycott, a consignment of goods addressed to the firm was seized and confiscated by Irregulars at the local railway station.

That same year Wood decided to buy the residence of County Inspector Walshe of the RIC on the Station Road. The Main Street premises had become too big for himself and his wife now that most of the family were living away from home, and Walshe's house seemed just the right size with the added attraction of a well-kept garden backing onto the River Suck. However, the night before he was due to move in the house was gutted in an arson attack. At the time there was speculation that it had been targeted not because of Wood's religion but because it had been a police residence.

In 1926 Wood announced his decision to sell the business but did not intend to advertise it or put it on the open market. Instead he offered it to the Nicholson family, long-time employees, for what they could afford. The understanding was that they would continue to trade under his name. John Wood retired to Belfast where he died in 1954 at the age of 92.



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Kilclooney Church and its graveyard, on the western side of Ballinasloe town is steeped in history, being one of the first Christian foundations in the area. The favoured translation of Kilclooney is the church or graveyard, near the meadow or pasture.

On the top of a steep hill, Kilclooney Church was built where the ancient church of St. Grellan once stood. This holy man, who's feast day is the 17th of September, lived during the 5th century and was a contemporary of St. Patrick who sent him to convert the tribes of Hy Many to Christianity.

Grellan became patron saint of the Ui Maines' descendants and they carried his staff, called Bachall Ghrellain, into battle up to the 16th century.

The church was erected in the late 15th century by the Canons Regular of St. Augustine who served the spiritual needs of the local people until the time of the reformation. It has not been used for formal worship since penal times.

Mr. Jim Higgins M.A., writing in the south east Archaeological & Historian society states that the medieval church of St. Grellan at Kilclooney near Ballinasloe is a multi-period one which contains a number of interesting carved and worked stones.

Foremost among these are two apparently male heads which are now reused to form stop-blocks to the moulded hood of a late 15th or 16th-century doorway in the southern long-wall of the church. The doorcase of limestone and so too, are the human heads.

In 2008 a local committee was formed to secure improvements to the graveyard, with John Egan as Chairman, Maura Corley Sec. and Eddie Jennings Treasurer. They have been doing tremendous work since. Over the years they have erected an outline profile or map of the graveyard. There are some unmarked graves but through their good work very many have been identified.

In the 1990's, agitation took place to have the graveyard extended. Galway County Council purchased an acre of ground from the McNeill family as an extension. It was ironic that Mr Joe Keane (RIP) Perssepark, was the first person to be buried in the new graveyard as he was to the forefront of getting the extension done through Ballinasloe Town Council and Galway County Council. The local committee and local contributions have laid out tarmacadam paths and grass to this extension. They also erected a headstone to the unbaptised children buried there. To date it is in pristine condition.

On the Northern face side of the church is the Church of Ireland part of the graveyard. There are 2 crypts and people are interred there from many counties including a Church of Ireland Pastor. The earliest known burial is about 1779.

An interesting point is in the old Derrymullen townland of about 12-14 houses, starting at Nevins, the residents of every second house are buried in either Kilclooney or Creagh cemeteries. The reason for this is unknown.

*Historical credit to Declan Kelly and Jim Higgins.*

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