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Vol. 11 Issue 1: Apr '21 - May '21



Photo by Robert Riddell

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REAMHRA

Welcome to Volume 11 issue 1

Welcome to this Easter's Edition and firstly thanks for all the lovely messages of support and congratulations on our milestone publication last Feb. It is encouraging to know how much our combined efforts mean to so many.

This is the 6th edition in a row since the Taoiseach's address in Washington without an events guide – we have as a society been devoid of planned events for 12 months. No one in the limited conversations we had in the early few weeks of this year mentions any more - Auld Moore's Almanac or the Donegal Postman with their prophecies on the months ahead. It's as almost in the daily drudgery of lockdown living we are losing the confidence to plan; as it's all based on NPHE's numbers.

Yet again these pages offer ample evidence of groups trying to make plans for our future, trying to bring services, food, smiles to folks in all sorts of difficult circumstances. Raising money for worthy causes, celebrating through word and photo rather than activity. All parts of building blocks of any community.

We salute in a small way our closeknit colleagues of vintner and hospitality families who have nearly remained shut for a full year with no definition on the horizon. We will all see better days ahead.

21 years after the purchase and renovation of St. Enda's Chronic in 1999, our Community Development Company with the Bank Chambers Office Hub project begins its town centre phase which as is happening in Holland, Canada and parts of the UK – the Community Trusts like the

Estate Landlords of the 17th and 18th Century command the freehold of the streets and commercial hearts; so they can determine how many tattoo parlours or boiled sweetshops they wish to have in their midst – far more effectively than the local Municipality.

Great news for our Saolta Hospital complex with the new €15 million 50 bed unit gone to tender and works started, another €20 million of state money earmarked for town development and €15m from the Dept of Ed for a new school, plus planning approved for some €25m of residential units leaves us well positioned for the decade ahead.

All good weathervane for the future but still the vibes are despondent – they need not be; vaccines will help but we are not going to be leaving levels for a few seasons anytime soon.

*"Hope springs eternal in the human breast,
Man never Is, but always To be blest.*

The soul, uneasy, and confin'd from home,

Rests and expatiates in a life to come." Wrote Alexander Pope.

Easter time is a wonderful time of renewal and hope – we hope it is for all our readers.

Le Gach De Ghui,
COLM CROFFY,
Editor.



Articles and Photos Welcome

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For the first time in a long number of years, Ballinasloe is going to be at the forefront of major Central & Local Government Investment. At the same time, I wish to acknowledge the investment by Galway Co Council in our fine Library and town enhancement scheme, an outlay of c €11m. I believe we need a multi-agency oversight group to link the various Government Departments who will be spending funds so that there is a co-ordinated work schedule and we all get value for money spent. Transport Infrastructure Ireland have been funded to the tune of c €800k to set up offices in the Library through which we hope they will co-ordinate the Athlone to Galway Greenway through Ballinasloe. They need to link in with the Bord of Works who are in the process of providing flood relief scheme at a cost of €8.5m. This is an ideal opportunity for these two organisations to work together so that walkers, cyclist and people with disabilities will be able to travel all the way along our unique blue way alongside the River Suck from Derrymullen to the Lock at the Motorway. Galway County Council are in the process of developing the link road at the rear of Main Street / Society Street in conjunction with the development of the new Town School, these all need to link in with and another. The Hidden heartlands have recently launched a plan for the development of the Region and have an initial budget of €74.5m, some of which will be available to initiatives in the Ballinasloe catchment area. Waterways Ireland also have plans to develop all waterways and in particular the lesser used routes under which Ballinasloe Marina would be a part, again these are all linked.

The development of St Brigid's campus is moving along as well as major investments in accommodation and facilities in Portiuncula Hospital. Ballinasloe Railway Station have also been allocated funding for upgrading. These will create new jobs in the area in conjunction with ongoing expansion of private business.

We in BACD have purchased a building on Society Street and will develop this to create further sustainable jobs in addition to the 180 in the Enterprise Centre in Creagh.

You all have a part to play in this process and will have opportunities through conversations and meetings to ensure all of the above projects are followed through to fruition. You can appreciate the impact all of the above will have on top of the welcome €400,000 shop front enhancement scheme which is now happening.

Galway County Council are in the process of finalising their 5 year plan. We in BACD are putting a 10 year plan in place with a focus on 3 pillars which encompasses all of the above and have made a sizeable submission to Galway Co Council for same to be incorporated into their plan. It has also been submitted to Roscommon County Council as 50% of the Ballinasloe Catchment area is in County Roscommon.

SEAMUS DUFFY,
Chairman Ballinasloe Area Community
Development Limited.



WHAT'S INSIDE

LOCAL NEWS

- 4 Lighting Scheme Developments
- 5 €400,000 Investment in Shop Fronts

BUSINESS

- 6 Ballinasloe at high risk of flooding
- 7 Tourism and Heritage Study
- 8 21 Years a growing - a personal tale
- 9 Old Bank to be a Working Hub
- 10 Grow Remote Chapter Develops
- 11 New Therapeutic Product
- 12 17 Pubs Closed for a Year
- 14 New Distillery's Marketing

COMMUNITY

- 16 Waste Transfer Decision Soon
- 16 Spring Photo Competition
- 17 CU holds first Virtual AGM
- 18 Upskilling Through GRETB
- 19 Social Services Team Still Serving
- 20 Killimor's New Data Hub
- 21 Volunteers Finish Graveyard Project
- 22 BOC Supporting Community Smiles!
- 23 INVOLVE - Still there for YOU!
- 24 Cycleway Mobilises Huge Support
- 25 Public Facilities Needed
- 26 Darcy Sisters Fundraising

28 Continual Local Big Clean-up

- 30 THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER...
- 34 Primed for Saving The Barn Owl
- 35 St Michael's Church Folk Choir
- 36 Karen Breen - Friday Song Day
- 38 Garbally Life 1951-1956
- 39 Cooke Conquers Canada

CULTURE

- 40 Editing Our President's Book
- 42 Town Band Help Celebrate
- 43 New Heritage Guide a Boost
- 44 Town Hall Theatre's Seomra Eile

SPORT

- 45 Flooring Porter Finish First at Cheltenham
- 46 Ballinasloe GAA Prepare For New Season
- 48 The 70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge
- 49 Parsons Scoops Arena Award

HERITAGE

- 52 Musical Brothers Pass Away
- 53 Aughrim man shot in Clifden
- 54 Local Darkness Into Light 2021
- 55 Laura Wood
- 56 Archdeacon Charles Trench
- 58 Obituaries



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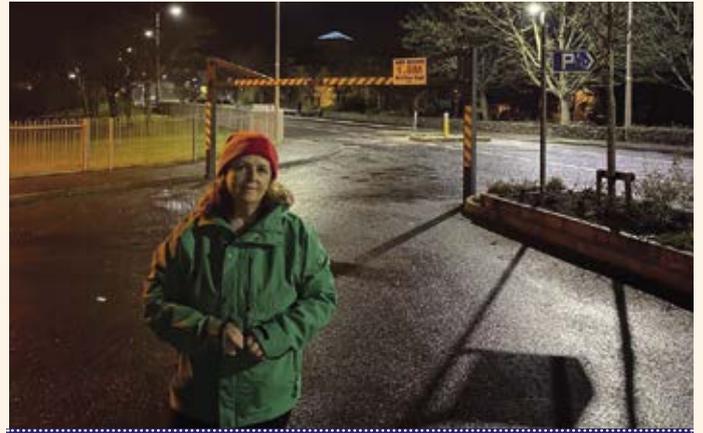
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The Town Centre has had issues with public lighting for many years now. It has become a health and safety hazard and Councillor Evelyn Parsons has taken up the cause of rectifying the black spots.

The Ballinasloe Cllr had put in her original request at the March Municipal District Council Meeting for additional lighting to be costed and installed on some of the lanes from Main St to the Marina and Parks. Critical to ensuring that the town is sufficiently lit are the Health and Safety issues. By illuminating the streets, parks and public spaces there is an immediate reduction in the risk of accidents and injuries aiding the safety of pedestrians and cyclists against road users.

Well-lit public spaces also provide the community with an extra feeling of security when going out, after dark especially, upon re-opening of night-time economy for the pubs and nightlife businesses providing safe access for staff patrons and customers. It should allow for increased access of the sloped lanes (Woodslip and Hobsons), leading to and from the new accessibility friendly bus-stops proposed for the Marina and Link Road Area. These lights should offer a new welcoming warmth for an increased number of visitors, tourists, cyclists and most importantly the community. At the recent municipal meeting, Cllr Parsons was informed that the new light installation, especially in those two lanes, had been prepared and priced to approximately €13,500. The council executive were of the view that Notice Of Money (NOM) would be needed to carry it out. Cllr Parsons states: "This was totally unacceptable-a fully comprehensive approach by the Council was clearly required towards providing Key Town Urban (Under RSES) Infrastructure. The costings have gone beyond the modest reach of the community's Notice Of Money and in any case, providing proper town lighting was not in the spirit for which NOM was intended." Given that the town is looking at attracting increased



Councillor Evelyn Parsons (IND)

numbers of cyclists, tourists and visitors, this urban necessity needed attention now along with budgetary provision for public toilet and public facilities upgrades. The NOM suggestion was deemed completely inappropriate by Cllr Parsons and her stance was supported by her colleagues present at the meeting. Funding must be sought elsewhere and she pointed out that there was an additional €180,000 in municipal funding provided at the Galway County Council annual budget meeting. "It is high time to raid the Landfill remediation fund which was set aside for Galway County Council to compensate and improve the quality of life for residents of Ballinasloe. The time has clearly come to use some of these monies for the purpose for which they were intended" states Parsons. So far, she has been pleased to see that the street lights operating correctly once again on both sides of Dunlo Street and bulb replacements on Sli na Habhain. Most lights are now working in the town with more to be serviced soon.

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Following the recent monthly meeting of Galway County Council, Councillor Timmy Broderick has secured funding of €200,000 to facilitate street scaping renovation in town.

Cllr Broderick along with fellow Cllr Evelyn Parsons and TD Denis Naughten have been campaigning for increased funding from Galway County Council in association with the Street Scaping Scheme.

The scheme was announced at the end of last summer as the Big Dig wound down and saw nearly 80 business owners apply for grant assistance to renovate, paint and repair the front facades of premises. News broke around estimates, that a meagre €80,000 had been allocated.

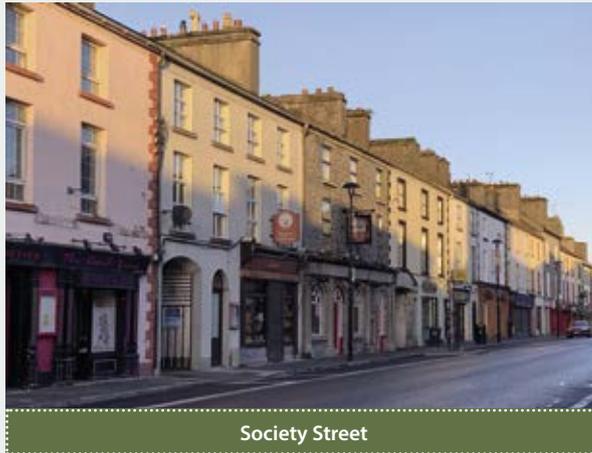
Cllr Broderick labelled it: "An insult to those who have to undertake major works to improve the streetscape in the town... What we are looking at is a paltry amount considering the turmoil that all businesses in Ballinasloe in recent times from the pandemic to the Town Enhancement Scheme, and associated road closures."

"Unreachable expenditures were built up a huge number have subscribed to it and the sum will be quite small. €1,000 each was not very much for them. There is no news on whether an architect will be appointed. I am very disappointed to what has come to pass on what looked to be a great scheme" explained Cllr Parsons.

Galway County Council Acting Director of Services, Alan Farrell explained: "A decision has been taken to further finance Ballinasloe Streetscapes in terms of shop fronts. We will get the highest impact in terms of expenditure, in the region of €200,000 is expected to give the town an uplift."

Cllr Parsons said: "The investment of €400,000 in the street scape will transform the town and be beneficial to both businesses and the people."

The scheme will now be architect led which means that colour pallet, styling and upgrading of pelmets and signage will follow



Society Street

uniform theme – anchored around a Victorian Provincial Market Town, to be able to draw down the support which will match fund 50% what the business owner is contributing.

Senator Aisling Dolan, who in late summer of last year pro actively canvassed businesses to apply for the scheme, referred to the project as generational. "We have the ability to resemble the bright engaging facades of a Clonakilty, Skibbereen or a Westport with this once in a lifetime project and I am so looking forward they way the town will look for out community and visitors alike in the late summer when all the sprucing up is done" noted Aisling.

She also referenced the work the local Street Representatives and BACD did in advocating for the scheme from the Council to assist town centre businesses.

TD Naughten added: "This funding will allow businesses to make a real difference to the appearance of the town and its potential to attract not just shoppers but also new businesses. Galway County Council investing €200,000 in Ballinasloe will help to encourage families and potential investor to choose our town rather than continuing struggling on a regular basis in Dublin and will, in the long run, increase the rate base and income for the Council to invest in other local projects."

Deputy Naughten has also been pushing for the vacant houses on busy streets to be purchased with a €15,000 grant being provided as a boost to new owners that would assist them with their mortgage.

"The reality is that there are quite a number of towns like Ballinasloe, where bringing families into vacant homes and buildings will bring new life into the community as well as supporting existing schools, clubs, and local services" he stated.

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The last few years have seen the threat of rising flood levels in the community become an imminent issue. It puts thousands of acres of farmland in the East Galway region at risk.

Councillor Evelyn Parsons raised the issue recently with the Office of Public Works Minister Patrick O'Donovan, challenging the rollout of Peatlands Scheme, whether or not the land is suitable to proceed given the circumstances and recent flooding the town has seen.

The meeting, that was facilitated by local TD Denis Naughten, discussed the short term and long term effects of the extreme flooding and rising groundwater risk and discussed the legacy of waste pollutants in the town and its surrounds.

Concerns were highlighted over the environmental impact and the impact it could have on people's health regarding leachates the drains into the soil. Kellysgrove is one of the first locations in the country to enter the Bord na Mona (BNM) Peatlands Scheme with the re-wetting of the bog set to commence in April which will bring the bog back to life but also heightens the risk of flooding.

SPC Chair Councillor Alastair McKinstry supported Councillor Parsons in her concerns that flooding and related issues merited significant challenges due to the environmental sensitivities that if not acted upon will have a great effect. The pair called for national guidance for these schemes for adaptations for these areas subject to extreme flooding.

Cllr Parsons pointed out: "Ballinasloe's Blackwater Bog Group is one of the first locations in the country to enter this re-wetting scheme. Kellysgrove Bog of 500 acres in the Poolboy area on the periphery of town is one of the first bogs set to commence in April, to be followed by Kilmacshane and Garysduff along to Clonfert. Castlegar, north of Ballinasloe, to Ahascragh is undergoing rehabilitation also."

Ensuring that every consideration is given to the impact on the boglands and the communities that it surrounds. The impacts of the devastating floods of 2009 are still fresh in the head of many which seen the M6 closed, 40 families relocated, businesses were

destroyed, supply chains disrupted and lives were at risk with the disruption of the emergency services. This cannot happen again and measures to prevent such a tragedy from occurring again must be taken. The councillor previously met with the BNM Project Team and the municipal district in December to welcome these measures.

The local Flood Alleviation Community Group (FAB) have been labouring long and hard to shore up the flooding defences, carrying out hydrological studies and protective measures assisted by Brian Connelly Builders post the 2009 devastating floods. Currently they are still keeping a watchful eye out on the river piling up sandbags at their door as a caution but also as a reminder of the ongoing threat.

Cllr Parsons stated: "The minister informed me that the Flood Relief Scheme for Ballinasloe is underway and progressing through the stages with no anticipated delay. I was informed that the old Suck Drainage Scheme funding has remained allocated". She also received several reassurances from Minister O'Donovan concerning ring-fenced funding for the Relief Scheme (BFRS), the East Bridge design, impacts on farming livelihoods as well as sustainable synergies between plans and flood relief measures.

Minister O'Donovan concluded that matters are progressing satisfactorily and that all the environmental considerations raised by the councillor would be examined in light of the multiplicity of plans and projects planned for the area since the initial Flood Relief Planning.



Councillor Evelyn Parsons (IND)



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BACD's submission to the Draft County Development Plan signalled the town's ambition as one of the few Gateway Towns from the Hidden Heartlands to the Wild Atlantic Way and our requirements to become one of the few towns in the Hidden Heartlands to evolve into a destination Tourism Hub.

With the refurbishment of the principal streetscapes completed, major new investments such as the Greenway, OPW, Waterways Ireland and indeed Hidden Heartland and Bord na Mona in the rewetting of bogs means its timely to undertake a Feasibility Study to offer a best practice route map for the development of a formal Tourism and Heritage Plan 2022 – 2027 for our community.

BACD has received a welcome grant towards the facilitation and compilation of the study from GRD Leader. Expressly the plan will: Identify an inventory of visitor tourism and heritage attractions, analyse the market position of all offering vis a vis competitors and analyse the event, hospitality and facility capabilities and positioning. Examine the positioning of Town and its current offerings as per the new Failte Ireland, Hidden Heartlands, Tourism Ireland, Irish Hotels Federation, Irish Waterways, OPW, Inland Fisheries, NWRA and Western Development Commission revised

strategies.

It will also engage with the key private and voluntary stakeholders in Culture, Heritage and Tourism Trade as to what plans they have and what support is needed over the next 60 months, along with examining models of best practice and innovative co-ordination and marketing utilised by other communities and determine which may be best for town and hinterland.

The final report will suggest some key priority actions for short term implementation.

Working Groups are being established in Leisure & Amenities, Hospitality & Trade, Heritage & Genealogy, Culture and Events to assist and its hoped a first draft will be available in a few months' time. Any ideas or suggestions please to info@ballinasleenterprisecentre.ie

1ST ANNIVERSARY OF SHOPBALLINASLOE.IE

One year ago the journey started with the launch of ShopBallinasloe.ie-enabling shoppers to connect with and purchase from their favourite local businesses locally.

At the time, many doors were closed, and uncertain times ahead for lots of local outlets. One year on, and although many doors remain closed — there is a new hustle and bustle behind these scenes, as businesses are busy preparing their online orders to their ShopBallinasloe.ie customers whatever part of the world they maybe in or accepting town vouchers where businesses are open!

Today, Shopballinasloe.ie hosts an even wider variety of Irish products from lots of different local businesses – allowing shoppers to browse across multiple ranges and services and checkout in one single transaction with their order shipped from the supplier straight to their home.

“Shopping local and supporting local businesses and jobs has never been more important. With a clear and simple message to ‘buy local’, ensuring our town survives. By choosing to shop on shopballinasloe.ie, or purchase town vouchers — everyone is making a difference that benefits the community” states Honoria Mitchell Black, one of the Co-ordinators.

In the past twelve months, some great milestones have been reached: over 100 businesses onboard, thousands of products available online, over €55,000 in online sales and an impressive 500k page views on the website.

In November of last year the Town Voucher scheme was launched just in time for Christmas. These vouchers have proved extremely popular with over €60,000 worth purchased worldwide - making them the perfect gift for any occasion or ideal prizes for Raffles, Draws, Golf Classics and Table Quiz's.

“We could not have achieved all this success without our local businesses, our online shoppers, our community, BACD, Ballinasloe Credit Union, Galway County Council, friends and family, who all helped along the way” explains Honoria. Festivities and online competitions are on hold till a later date!

In the meantime, if you have a special occasion coming up or maybe you have a family member overseas – have them gift you some Town Vouchers or hop on shopballinasloe and browse.



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

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In August 2000, I with some two hundred other people were made redundant from A.T. Cross Ltd the manufactures of writing instruments. I had suspected about a year before that the "axe" would fall and decided I would try to set up my own business.

With my business experience I identified a gap in the market for start-ups and early stage companies. Business needs technical expertise which is usually the founders' skill. They also need Management skills and access to funding which I could provide.

Entrepreneur's-Engineers, Bio Tech. IT experts, et al, would have the ideas and I put their plans together and provide Management support. This allows them to do the technical aspects of the job, without the worry of all the other stuff.

The plan was to work from home, no need for offices or overheads. Sounds familiar! My first client: a company developing an application for mobile phones arrived at my house for an initial meeting. There were three people from the Company ushered into our front room. First question, where was my phone and land line. Our phone at the time was in the hall and was almost at the ceiling to stop our four active children dialing numbers for fun. No blue tooth or broadband in the year 2000. The initial meeting was a fiasco.

I was in trouble. I headed to the fledgling Enterprise Centre where I met Gerry Cleary and Terry Noone, to seek office space to rent. The only two floors up and running were fully let to a US online gambling Company. I met the Manager of the US Company. A nice young man from Arizona who allocated us some unused space on the ground floor.

We agreed a rent of €100 a month with a review and I moved in that day. Shortly after I moved in work commenced on renovating another part of the Centre. Four offices, toilet and a small conference room were built where the St Theresa's special school is now located. I took the lease on the entire unit and was joined by Sean Brennan who ran a Consulting Business for Electronics companies, Colm Croffy a Festivals and Events Consultant and David Flynn Health & Safety expert. The conference room was used by the Board of BEC and by a number of businesses and organisations from the Town.

After the crash of 2008/9 we had to reconfigure. With the help of the BEC Manager we downsized and David Flynn and myself continued in a smaller office where we continue to operate. Mike Dowd, a project Consultant in the construction industry, has joined us recently.

During the period I have been involved with around forty start-up



Original St Enda's Hospital Building in early 1960's

companies and early stage businesses. Many have survived and prospered others failed. Such is the nature of start-ups. We also work with County Enterprise Boards, EI, IDA and other State agencies. Projects have covered IT, State bodies, Sports Organisations, Food, Bio Technology, Sustainable Power, Executive training & Mentor programs.

In partnership with BEC, Ballinasloe Credit Union and John M. Power & Associates we ran the successful BEST Entrepreneur's awards programme for Secondary Schools for about six years. I look forward to seeing some of the prize winners emerging as Entrepreneurs of the future.

We have managed through the ups and downs of redundancy, banking crisis, clients going bust and not been paid money we were owed and other unplanned events.

The Covid 19 crisis is another such event along the business path. During our time we have received help from unlikely sources at critical times, some local, some international. In these times of no meeting up, we try keep your network channels open by phone, letter, email or however we can.

The last 21 years have been really enjoyable. I continue to work with Entrepreneurs of all types and ages. Almost all of them are very talented and capable people. Every day I myself am educated and stimulated by their ideas and energy.

Our Enterprise Centre has been an amazing success. It has been operational for almost 22 years. Without it I would never have got my business up and running. We will continue to partner with BEC and look forward to a major "bounce back" in business start-ups when Covid 19 has been eliminated.



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OLD BANK TO BE A WORKING HUB

BY COLM CROFFY

The Bank Chambers Building on Society Street has been purchased by Ballinasloe Community Development Company (BACD) to facilitate Pulse Club members, local entrepreneurs and hubs to strategically locate in the town, collaboratively working together alongside the existing enterprise centre in Creagh.

The original Enterprise Centre is full, the Library Hub is full and there is limited modern dedicated office / hub type space in the locality.

This will add 6,000 square feet of space for the Enterprise Centre to use. The modern office renovation, installation, upgrades and facilities for approximately 35 workers foresees a budget envelope of €580,000, with nearly €500,000 coming by way of Grant Aid from the Bord na Mona-Just Transition Programme.

"We have lots of enquiries for new space at the Centre, with people who are remote working from home, even to come in and use their own dedicated desk space for a few days a week and this development will follow best national and international design and practice in accommodating a mix of remote, office and self employed worker who need blended office and desk conditions within a specialist environment and supports" stated Lyn Donnelly BACD Manager, who will manage the project and select successful clients.

Formerly the National Irish Bank, it was taken over by the Bank of Ireland in the late 1940s where it remained until 1993, and since then it has been in private ownership.

The premises had been secured for purchase through a loan from Ballinasloe Credit Union. The Design Team for the refurbishment works will be appointed over the coming weeks and once the project is given the green light, the plan is to have the centre open for business within 12 months.

BACD Chairperson Seamus Duffy is very excited. "This has been the result of hard work and prudent management of the last 20 years by successive boards of directors in managing all previous state grants for job creation and town development, in building direct partnerships with state agencies and lenders. The Just Transition Fund have found a worthwhile and serious partner for support for their objectives and we look forward to delivering this first job creation project for them".

Brendan Kelly of KPW stated: "Not many might remember that KPW spent 35 years (1950-1985) in Society St., and we all have great memories from there. Society St. had a great mix of businesses from Retailers to an Egg and Wool store, Solicitors, Restaurants, Schools and a Bank too. We are delighted to see our old Bank of Ireland being developed into a business Hub - this is very exciting news for Society Street and

Ballinasloe. KPW have always had an association with the street (and still has) and the many friends we have there to this day, we want to support it in any way we can."

For further details contact Lyn Directly in Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre on 0909646516



Cllr. Michael Connolly (FF) Brian King, Anita Killeen, Noel Madden, Valerie Dolan, Lyn Donnelly, Manager, Joe Lyons



John McKenna, Pearse Keller, Seamus Duffy Chair, Ruth Sheridan Cregg, Dan Dowling, Marina Downey. Missing from photos: Directors Kevin Broderick, Sean Kelly & Eoghan Kenny



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Renate Kohlmann

The local Chapter of national network of remote (home or hub workers), has had a busy few pandemic months and with some many folk being forced to rethink the commute and obligatory office attendance – new possibilities are opening up – that the Chapter maybe able to help with.

Grow Remote has launched a free online mini-course available to anyone who would like to find a telecommuting role. As a CLG (non-profit) organisation, focused on community development, the organisation's return is when a person becomes employed and can live locally. Because of this, they can bring together everything needed to find work from home. Sign up now to their Learning Hub! Access the course through the landing page on their website. This course runs alongside the Monthly Jobs Club that is free for all to attend. The Jobs Club is based around a monthly meetup (via Zoom) to help people in the search for work possible at home. Register for Jobs Club events at their Ballinasloe Facebook Group. The next event takes place Thursday, April 13 from 6:30 pm to 8 pm. In February the non-for profit partnered with Regional Skills West, Galway Executive Skillnet, iTag Skillnet, and Gréasán na Meán Skillnet to hold a Free Workshop 'Remote West Works' targeted at workers and managers of teams working online, to give practical advice on how to work more efficiently and deal with challenges in the current environment.

Dorothy Scarry of Workplace Health & Wellbeing spoke on Psychological Safety & Wellbeing and Renate Kohlmann of Grow Remote & RK Consulting helped with the facilitation.

In 2020, after Covid-19 forced so many people to work from home, GR ran the first survey about working virtually in Ballinasloe. A year later a revised survey has been launched. They are interested in receiving your feedback and would kindly ask as many people as possible to complete the short 3-minute survey. Results on the

survey will be posted in future editions. To complete the survey simply scan the QR code or follow the link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2HFK8TV> To join the chapter, join their Facebook Group or register into the Group in Chngex from the Community Tab at www.growremote.ie or drop a note to Coordinator Renate Kohlmann, Contact: hello@growremote.ie



Survey QR Code

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Georgina (Gina) Higgins-Adams Founder R&G Essentials

R&G Essentials was founded by Georgina (Gina) Higgins-Adams in Moylough, launched in October 2019. Gina is a busy mom of two little girls who she named her company after. R&G offers candles and flower diffusers which are now available on their website with products ranging from €6 to €55 for Ireland and the UK.

Gina became a member of the PULSE Club business network a few months after establishing and found the seminars and networking opportunities useful.

Gina has worked for many years in the area of alternative health, studying Reiki healing & teaching, nutrition and mindfulness. Gina was always passionate about her work and in her spare time she liked to get creative & loved to make up her own blends and lotions. Adoring aromas and the therapeutic affects they can have whether it be food, a candle or perfumes, Gina believes inhaling a beautiful scent can have positive benefits and bring you to that 'happy place'.

R&G Essentials pride themselves in using high quality luxury ingredients, choosing not to use any paraffin or parabens and no artificial dyes. All waxes are natural using soya plant based wax and coconut/rapeseed wax which gives a clean burn and long lasting candles

If you would like to know more about their products please do not hesitate to contact Gina: support@randgessentials.com or visit their website: www.randgessentials.com. Facebook: www.facebook.com/randgessentials and Instagram: www.instagram.com/randgessentials

UNEMPLOYMENT 50 YEARS AGO

There were 520 "On the Dole" in 1971 when the town featured in the RTÉ archives lately, where a clip produced by Michael Ryan included the Chamber of Commerce and Urban District Council being very agitated at a decision of a Belgian businessman to move a meat production factory from a site in Ballinasloe to Clara.

With NO Square D or AT Cross in town, securing a large factory for employment was a key concern of business and political interests. Watch the full clip with some contributions from community leaders gone to their rest by visiting <https://www.rte.ie/archives/2021/0225/1199354-ballinasloe-is-losing-jobs/>

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“Ye’ll never know what ye’ll reap” declared a nonogenarian when she read that the Irish Pub would be allowed open on a Good Friday in March 2018 after 90 years of closure on the Lord’s Day.

We got two Good Fridays at the taps, and in recompense we have had the two following Good Fridays closed-along with a whole lot of everything else!

Dry Pubs/Wet Pubs, wearing masks, social distancing, no singing, no dancing, staying to our seats, no revelry for the few weeks of the last 12 months they have been open.

Christmas, New Year’s, Valentines, The Six Nations, Paddy’s Day, Cheltenham, all without the conviviality of the public house. While it truly feels like wartime outside of the bar – there can’t be too many among us who have not huge sympathies for the owners, families and staff of these premises which are a huge communal sitting room for so many.

“We had massive support when we were last open-phenomenal to say the least. Can’t say how much we appreciate it. Stay safe and mind yourselves and we will re-open again when advised to do so” states Joby Kelly of Joe’s.

“A year of opening and closing, reminiscing back on the good times that we had here, from sneaky pints on Wednesday, some music on Friday, packed Saturday nights to a visit from Sam on a Sunday, we PROMISE they will come again.... When the time is right” hopes Conor Ryan of neighbouring Ryan’s Bar, one of the oldest family run premises in town.

“We have not seen as much of you as we would like, however the most important thing is to keep our loved ones safe. We are a resilient race of people and when we are all vaccinated we will

bounce back stronger of character, hopefully kinder and more appreciative of those around us and ready to resume some form of normality” encourages Kathryn Gibbons of the Pillar House.

“The continued closure of our business, and ambiguity of the months ahead have not been easy to deal with. After more than a year of constant uncertainty, the challenge of predicting the future has unfortunately become no easier.

We are however, repeatedly motivated by the unwavering support we have received from friends, family, customers, and staff, and would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of them for their generosity and loyalty throughout these trying times.

Its important to focus on the positives. With developments such as the possible inclusion in the Greenway, funding secured by our councillors for the business enhancements and welcome construction taking place at our local hospital, we are hopeful of what the future holds.

Most importantly, continue to look after one another during these difficult times and have a safe and happy Easter” encourages Tomas and Caroline of Gullane’s Hotel.

All of us at LIFE and members of the community wish all our Publican and Hospitality sector the strength and courage to stick with the difficult road ahead to more normal times.

SHANNONSIDE SESSIONS

BY KEVIN BOLAND

Born in Ballinasloe in 1968, Kevin Boland emigrated to London in 1989, he now lives in Surrey, with his wife and daughter. He works for the civil service. His parents – John and Nuala still live in Birchgrove.

It’s been just over a year since I was lucky enough to visit home. In February 2020 we had no idea what was to come, but here we are. I remember as we landed in Shannon, it being bitterly cold, as my old friend Dusty says “sure isn’t it 10 degrees colder here than it is in London!”

In June of the previous year I had also made the journey home, on my own, to visit my parents, and to see how the town and surrounds had changed. There were some new additions on Main Street and work had begun on street enhancement. It was always good to be back, where the pace of life was healthier, and the stores have a choice of not just black, but also white pudding! A real fire and a bit of live music and I could not be happier, but things change and people move on, nothing stays the same.

Almost religiously, when I’m home, I pay a visit to Shannonbridge, the scene of many an energetic day and night during my teens.

In the mid-eighties, with a new driving licence, and the keys to an old open-top Citroen Dyane, we would rendezvous at Staunton’s in Creagh and head east, through Culliagh and Cloonfad, past Coreen Woods and drive over the mighty river Shannon on a clattering wooden slatted bridge into the province of Leinster. It was pure escapism.

At the end of the Main Street, with the Blackwater Bog turf fed power station off to the right, stood J.J. Killeens pub, its unpretentious exterior giving no indication of the good times to be had inside. Now, visiting with my father, it looked and smelled exactly the same. He ordered a coffee and looked disapprovingly as I ordered an Arthur Guinness.

It was a place of two halves, in that it had two front entrances, one



John and Kevin Boland enjoying a drink

for the general store-cum-Aladdin’s Cave, and one for the bar. It was in the latter, under a huge black and white portrait of the actor George Brent, whose people hailed from nearby, that we used to sit and absorb this exotic atmosphere. We laughed, we drank, and we sang, along with equally excited Germans, French, Dutch and Americans, they were all there. They had come by cruiser, from Banagher, and beyond, in search of bream, rudd and tench that hide amongst the reeds of this mighty waterway. By day they would hear the corncrake crow from their bankside nests and wonder at the lushness of the grassland Callows.

The shop sold almost everything, fishing bait, Peterson Pipes, Ladies and Gents burial habits, groceries, and tobacco. On the counter stood the gleaming piece de resistance, the bacon slicer. It was entertainment on its own. Turf smoke drifted through from the bar and everybody, farmers and tourists alike, seemed affable.

The bar was dimly lit with hundreds of business cards and foreign currency from all over the world pinned above it. If you were lucky, Michael would take down a new puzzle and see if you could crack it, smiling away as you toiled to understand what it was used for.

I remember it being so busy that leaving your seat to go anywhere, meant squeezing and ducking past rows of porter, either settling, or being passed to thirsty patrons.

I don’t know if I preferred it more back then, than I did on my last visit, but it holds a special place for me, and while I know there will be lots of better stories about this little gem of a place, I wanted to share mine, before they slip away from me.

*When things go wrong and will not come right,
Though you do the best you can,
When life looks black as the hour of night –
A pint of plain is your only man.*

Flann O’Brien.



An Tain



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Downey's Bar



Dunlo Tavern



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Alison Greene - New Marketing and Communications Lead

It's all systems go for Ahascragh native Alison Greene who took up the daunting challenge of being Marketing and Communications Lead to Ireland's newest Distillery McAllisters recently.

Alison is no stranger to the picturesque village that straddles the Bunowen – her Grandfather John ran the Greenes' Animal Disposal Business for years, whilst Dad Kevin and Mum Anne operate the successful Topline Greenes' Hardware Store.

Educated locally at Fohenagh N.S. and later at Holy Rosary, Mountbellew, Alison, despite growing up in hurling mad family preferred the stage to the pitch – being the eldest of three with her sister Sarah working in France and youngest Robert a leaving cert student! Her extracurricular interests saw her a keen supporter of Fohenagh and Galway Hurling but also finding her own creative expression on stage.

"TY, after school – the Centre Stage Youth Theatre with Majella Flanagan, Alfie Kilduff, The Pantos, the Musicals in the Town Hall and of course Fohenagh Drama Group locally gave me a huge love of theatre" states Alison.

Little wonder that her third level choice was a BA in Theatre and Performance at the O'Donoghue Centre, NUIG followed by a Masters in Arts Management and Cultural Policy at UDC. She was accepted on a Graduate Development Scheme with Business to Arts in Dublin and eventually came back west to work as Marketing and Communications Lead with Gary Hynes's acclaimed DRUID in Galway.

"There is something of DRUID that is so appealing to the creative, that you can be anchored in the west but that your horizon of ambition must always be the world, maybe it's the Synge legacy" she muses.

Whatever about the lure of thespian world there is nothing that she has not honed skills in Marketing and Communications that she will be not transferring to her new role with the McAllisters Distillery. "If I can take a pinch of DRUID's ambition, an ounce of Gary's determination and boldness to what we are doing here I will be happy" exhorts Alison.

Her last project with DRUID was organising the tour of Gregory/Murphy around the County in Autumn of last year – including Ballinalsoe before she took up her role in early winter with the McAllisters Eco Distillery.

As many readers are aware, the old 19th century Mill complex is being completely overhauled as one of Ireland's first eco – (powered by renewal energy) distilleries and will complimented by "The Old Mill Shop and Café" directly across the road which will be renovated and open in mid-summer this year.

The distillery and bespoke visitor centre, estimated €7 million worth of investment, is to open in late 2022 but the McAllisters have been in the whiskey business in Antrim in the mid 1700s and have been sourcing and blending Irish batch Whiskies and Gins for a number of years – especially for the Asian emerging markets. Clan Colla was one of the first brands produced by the family in the 1700s and this will be the name of the first source- release.

"This is a hugely exciting opportunity for me to help deliver over 70 indirect jobs and some 15 direct jobs over 3 years to my home village in a sustainable and rooted way. I will be responsible for telling people our story, explaining the products we will be making, the sustainable processes behind it and indeed the original history of the Mill complex before its new role" she states.

She is genuinely marvelling at how in her late 20s and in the early stages of her professional marketing career she finds herself back in the west of Ireland and pursuing a dream job. "This just proves that with broadband,



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Michelle and Gareth Mc Allister - Proprietors



Architect's Impression of New Distillery and Visitors Centre, Ahascragh

modern communications and creative enterprise my generation can dream of living in the countryside without a lengthy commute, horrific accommodation costs and a better quality of living-with clean air, great amenities and the bigger cities within easy reach" Alison expounds.

Her first marketing campaign is the new cask programmes which have become very popular with families, groups of friends, clubs or companies. Obviously it's a great investment but It's also a very special way of marking a milestone or celebrating an occasion.

This Founders Cask Programme is quite unique in that it's customizable. The client chooses the spirit, the wood and the finish. "It really is your whiskey, made by you. You can be as involved in the process as you want to be. There are benefits including tours, discounts, a founders event and more but I think what makes this programme particularly special is that by purchasing a cask you become a Founder Member of the Ahascragh Distillery and you get to own a little piece of Irish whiskey history" explains Alison.

Asked to what her appointment and the project signals for rural villages she is of the opinion that post pandemic many couples and professionals will be looking out for lifestyle changes and that East

Galway / South Roscommon will have advantages.

"Covid is forcing us all to look differently on what is around us, and we are so ingrained in where we live, if our villages and towns can have appealing cultural, leisure, amenity, food, health and educational facilities with decent broadband and affordable housing – the trickle could become a stampede" enthuses the daily runner and regular open swimmer – although she does admit it may be less of Salthill dipping and more Bunowen bathing on the Clonbrock estate this summer!

In describing what future success might look like she is keen to stress the importance of the project being ingrained locally and working with the suppliers, the growers, the craftspeople, the community and surrounds in a sustainable way.

"I hope to help establish a new lease of life for the Mill, the visitor centre, the village in a modern and environmentally sensitive way – we will not have Cliffs of Moher bus loads here, we will have quality small holistic visitor experiences that will reflect the ambiance and positives of Ahascragh and our pastoral setting for domestic and international culturally curious", said Alison.

Further details on the distillery: www.mcallisterdistillers.com

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SPRING PHOTO COMPETITION



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Since the launch of the Ballinasloe Town Team Instagram page we have noticed our followers posting beautiful pictures of Ballinasloe as they enjoy the outdoors on their walks, cycles etc.

We love to see this, as it is the very ethos of the Town Team-promoting our community as a great place to live, work and visit. We have so much going for us a Town and community and sometimes we all need to be reminded of this.

We have decided to launch a photo competition-we would encourage people to pop onto Instagram and follow our page;ballinasloetownteam. Post your great photos of Ballinasloe and tag us in your post.

Deadline for entries is the 10th May 2021. The Town Team will pick our favourite 5 photos. These top 5 will be posted on Town Team Insta and Ballinasloe Life social platforms for a public vote. The most liked and shared photo will win.

Winner announced on June/July edition of Ballinasloe Life Magazine.

OUR RETAIL ESSENTIAL WORKERS

There are over 400 workers in Ballinasloe classed as essential retail during this Pandemic. One such worker is James Caulfield, a 61-year-old native from Creagh, entering his third decade in Grocery Retail, in a long varied working career.

Technology has evolved since James started out at Haslam & Mahon's in Main Street, aged 12 and grocery retail has certainly come a long way since rashers were sliced to order.

James remembers: "We used to call him Horace Jenkins, the Manager, but he ran it himself along with his wife. You'd do deliveries to your customers by bike with your box of messages on the front." James remains nostalgic of Haslam's, but is amazed at how retail has progressed through changes to technology over the years.

A visit to the shops is great for mental health and wellbeing during lockdown, it has allowed customers a quick physical hello should they meet loved ones. For so many of us – often a few pleasant words exchanged with our cashier or sales assistant is as much social engagement that we have outside of family in the week!

James, who currently holds a senior position with a leading multiple chain exclaims: "I am very proud to be of essential service to the local community of Ballinasloe in these tough times. Sooner rather than later we will be coming out of this pandemic, and I hope that I along with my customers will be able to move onto the new norm and I hope to accommodate them in every way possible."



James Caulfield

WASTE TRANSFER DECISION SOON

BY JACK TREACY

A final decision on the Waste Transfer Licence will be made by Galway County Council by The Environment Section in mid-April. Hundreds of submissions were made even during lockdown. Families, clubs, community groups, businesses – everyone had their say on the future for the town.

Over the past number of months, many people have been out enjoying the walks within the 5k through bogland areas along by the bog roads through Poolboy/Kellysgrove and along the Grand Canal during this tough time of Covid-19 Lockdown.

With no official public park in Ballinasloe, this is amazing natural resource full of beauty and biodiversity – has really been rediscovered and has to be protected for future generations

PRO and Co-Founder Senator Aisling Dolan again praised those involved: "Thank you from all on our Committee to all our Volunteers



Ballinasloe Says No Committee

and again to all who have supported our fundraisers over the past number of years. It is thanks to the people of Ballinasloe that we have been able to fight this battle and it will continue".

All notified parties to the decision will have the right to appeal. Contact: Aisling Dolan for further queries (086) 369 0719

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CU HOLDS FIRST VIRTUAL AGM

BY JACK TREACY

Given the unprecedented year in terms of the changes that the pandemic has wreaked, the Virtual AGM, was a first for Ballinasloe Credit Union. Members were invited to register to attend the meeting online where a comprehensive review of the financial year was reported.

Strong attendance from the membership was evident and attendees were advised they are members of a strong Credit Union with assets of €129 million. Income for the financial year was €3.6m from which a surplus of just under €1m was generated. The Gross loans to total assets ratio of 32%, is one of the strongest among peer Credit Unions in Ireland – those with total assets of over €100 million.

Chairperson, Marian Brady, advised that the Credit Union will soon be offering both Home Mortgages and a Current Account with Debit Card, from May 2021.

Speaking at the AGM, Marian explained that "Every day, we're taking enquiries from members who want to do more and more of their financial services business with their Credit Union. We're delighted that we'll shortly be offering a full-service current account, with a debit card and a competitive mortgage product."

It was also reported at the meeting that a project to complete internal renovations to the Credit Union Building on Main Street had begun. The refurbishment will allow the Credit union to provide members with a modern, safe and welcoming space within which to conduct their business. During the year, further digital enhancements to members online services are planned with the introduction of remote member onboarding and full end to end loan application including digital signature capability so that the credit union can continue to provide services both in branch and online that will make a positive difference in members lives.

Speaking at the meeting, CEO Grainne Murphy, acknowledged that while the Credit Union was looking forward to the introduction of these new products and services it is important to remind the public that throughout the pandemic, credit unions have remained on hand to support members during a very challenging and uncertain time. "We are here to support our members and the local economy and remind members that BCU is lending. She went on to add "In the wake of the recent commentary about the closure of bank branches, our message to our local community is very clear.

We are here to stay. We're committed to playing our part in supporting the people within our local community by providing an exemplary, personalised service to our members whether they choose to conduct that

business online or in branch. We will continue, as ever, to put the needs of our members at the heart of everything that we do. We also understand the importance of supporting our community and this has always been practically demonstrated through our donations to, and sponsorship of, a wide range of community groups. This strong commitment to supporting organisations and initiatives that benefit the local community is also dependent on members continuing to borrow from the Credit Union", states Grainne.

They continue to offer loans to existing members, members not have seen for a while and of course those in the local community who have yet to become members and may be new to the idea of the credit union. So call in, go online or contact them today and enquire because they're lending!.

Prior to the election of the Board of Directors and oversight committee, retiring Board members Mike O'Reilly, Michael McKeown, John Doolan and retiring BOC member Sinead Manning were thanked for their endeavours. Re-elected Adrian Ahern, John Coughlan, Mary Feeney with new directors Brian King, David Gallagher and Sean Madden.

The 2021 Board is completed by Mary Coughlan, Patricia Tierney Seamus Kelly, Sean Kelly & Marian Brady who was also re-elected as Chairperson. Aidan Clifford joins Elaine Bannerton and Edward Kelly on the Board oversight committee.

Ballinasloe Credit Union is open for business Monday – Friday 9.30 – 5.30 & Sat 9.30 – 4.30. Tel 0909643179 or visit the website www.ballinasloecreditunion.ie



Shane Mc Neill BCU using the new MYCU Debit Card for the first time in Ballinasloe with Martina Reynolds

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St. Patrick's Day Celebrations



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Ballinasloe's unemployment levels have been rising reaching over 1,100 (1,123) with many availing of the Government's PUP Scheme but perhaps now is a good time to try to re-enter the workforce by completing a course with Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (G.R.E.T.B).



Lynne Keery Along with Tutors Presents Certificates to Students in Healthcare, Childcare and Business 2018



Modern and state of the art Carpentry Facilities in Galway

Funded by SOLAS, education is provided in an environment that encourages you to explore many different sectors with online courses, full-time courses and evening courses all available.

Operating since 2013 from the old Vocational School premises on Sarsfield Road with The Ballinasloe College Further Education (BCFE) they are committed to the learner for access to employment opportunities in the future by developing your skills to compete in the employment market.

Training courses in IT Support Specialist, Beauty Therapy, Cleanroom Operator and Pharmacy Retail Sales all deliver substantial work placements opening doors to a career in these industries. Driving courses covering: Bus/Mini Bus Driving, Heavy Goods Vehicles Rigid/Articulate, Employment Skills (Forklift, Safe-pass and Manual Handling) and Delivery Driver, are also offered. 2021 sees the launch of the RSA Approved Driving Instructor Course.

For those looking for a more hands-on career, GRETB has fully equipped workshops for Carpentry and Joinery, Plumbing, Electrical, Motor Mechanic and Metal Fabrication for Apprenticeship delivery and Computer-Aided-Design (CAD)/Computer-Numerical-Control (CNC) and Welding. Their Apprenticeship programmes are administered through the Training Centre. The Apprenticeship Programmes vary from two years to four years in duration and range from Quality and Qualifications Ireland level five to level nine. As well as the traditional trades there are Apprenticeships in Auctioneering, Manufacturing, Software Developer, Accounting Technician, Insurance Practitioner and many more. New apprentices on the Arboriculture Apprenticeship and Craft Butchery Apprenticeship are now being rolled out.

For those wary of social interaction during these Pandemic Times, the organisation have a variety of online courses available including:

International Computer Driving License (ICDL), Payroll, Computing Technology Industry Association Fundamentals and Door Security and Guarding Skills. As part of the response to Covid-19 the institution also offers the Infection Prevention and Control Course.

Under the Government-funded 'Skills to Advance' initiative, which allows employers to avail of highly beneficial and fully funded training to benefit their organisation, whether it's to improve their employee's skill levels, respond to the changing nature of business or take advantage of emerging opportunities. Upskilling staff is central to delivering long term sustainable growth and also essential to coping and adapting to the rapid change experienced in the past year.

Courses available under this initiative include: Payroll (Manual and Computerised), Supervisory Management, Customer Service in Industry, Digital Marketing and Human Resources.

Full-time course hours are 8:30 am to 3:30 pm Monday-Thursday and finishing at 12:30 pm on Fridays. GRETB offers flexible training including evenings beginning between 18:30 pm to 19:00 pm and Saturday courses take place at 20:00 pm in areas such as Door Guarding Security, IT, Manufacturing, Training & Development, Engineering and Welding.

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SOCIAL SERVICES TEAM STILL SERVING

BY JACK TREACY

One year has passed since Ballinasloe Social Service's (BSS) Daycentre closed due to Covid-19. A terrible blow to the older people who attended regularly and also to the volunteers and staff who worked with the care providers.

Initially, it was thought that the closure would last for about 6 weeks, but this was unfortunately false! The Daycentre provided a home away from the typical home environment for older citizens in the community, facilitating them to live independently in their own homes within the wider community and to provide a little respite for the carer. This cohort is very susceptible to disease so they have had no choice but to remain closed since March 2020.

The Team however have been kept busy over the past year, upgrading their utility and storage areas, after being awarded a grant from Galway County Council. Other facilities such as the kitchen has been refurbished with a grant from St. Vincent de Paul providing a fabulous kitchen area for when the Daycentre re-opens. They also are looking forward to having a new bus to collect their elderly clients upon re-open, thanks to a grant from the Department of Rural and Community Development's Clar programme.

Meals on Wheels has continued to operate during the entire year, ensuring that older people and anyone recovering from illness can avail of nutritious homemade soup and a main course, delivered to their home with a smile and some friendly words while abiding by all Public Health Guidelines. A recent contribution has also been made by St. Michael's Folk Group for their fantastic donation of €1,850 towards Meals on Wheels. Gratitude has also been expressed to Galway County Council, Galway Rural Development and Community Foundation of Ireland for their grants allowing for upgrades and adaptations through the year.

The Childcare Pre-School and TLC operated under Public Health guidelines during the past year. During times of forced closure, families were offered an opportunity to access a toy library, using the equipment within the centre, which addressed the developmental and specific needs of each child.

From January, a scaled-down pre-school

programme has been offered but as restrictions lifted they have now re-opened fully in line with Public Health regulations. Galway Rural Development grant aided the replenishing of toys used for the toy library. The Department of Children also stepped in some grants to prepare for re-opening and to build a shelter for outdoor play.

Social Services have been doing everything possible to keep in touch with everyone. Staff have regular phone conversations with clients, carrying out home visits that adhere within Public Health guidelines, corresponding through the post and sending birthday cards and lottery tickets to anyone who is celebrating their birthday. A mass was also said for all involved in Social Services.

Art Teacher Lily Kelly has continued to deliver online art classes to participants with deliveries of art supplies being funded by Galway Roscommon Education & Training Board (GRETB). At Christmas, homemade cakes and pots of jam were supplied to all clients, which were made by staff members and board members. Staple food items were also delivered at this time and currently another delivery is being made for Easter.

"We wish to express our immense gratitude to every person and organisation who has supported us in the past year, which has been difficult for everyone. With the advent of the vaccine programme, we look forward to opening our Daycentre's doors in the not too distant future and greeting everyone back to our home away from home environment. Until then, stay safe!" states Therese Coughlan Manager.



Art on Display



Meals on Wheels Deliveries

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KILLIMOR'S NEW DATA HUB UP AND RUNNING! BY JACK TREACY

Killimor Data Hub is a new community facility based in the old national school just off the main street in Killimor. Works on the facilities began last September and finished in December and since then they have been inundated with many companies, business people and organisations already making use of their excellent services and with affordable prices, it is the perfect place to set up a remote office.



Jimmy McClearn PRO of the Data Hub

The very active Recreation and Fitness group led by Chair Fr. Ciaran Kitching, identified a need for remote working opportunities in the Community. The idea was put into motion and funding was secured of €25,000 under the Towns and Villages accelerator programme.

With five individual work stations plus high-speed fibre broadband connection and associated services including a kitchenette and dining area available for short term or long term rent, the facilities are very modern.

A conference room is also available to rent, usable for one to one or group interactions. Each workstation measures approximately 40 square feet and the conference room

measures approximately 400 square feet. An additional room measuring 140 square feet is also available for rent within the complex.

The five individual workspaces are designed for individual use but Covid-19 restrictions means tailoring of area specific needs.

Renting of their facilities is available from as little as €10 per day with a package deal of €40 for five days. This covers everything within the Centre.

Upon registration, each user obtains an access code to the building allowing for time flexibility and once-off arrangements can be

made with committee members. Use of the facilities on bank holidays or the weekend normal day rates apply.

The hard working committee behind the new development are: Chairperson Fr. Ciaran Kitching, Secretary Marie Porter, Treasurer Marina Moran, PRO Jimmy McClearn; Sean Treacy, Caroline Hardman, Noeleen Reilly, Michael Winters, Pdraig Burns and Thomas Porter.

In 2013 the not for profit community group took out a 35-year lease on the Old National School. Plans were put in place and using a number of massive fundraisers and grants from various Government Departments they developed an Astroturf pitch and a walking/running track. After purchasing adjoining land it was possible to install a state of the art Children's Playground, also converting three classrooms into a community Gymnasium and provided showers, Toilets, Changing Rooms.

The project had two Classrooms and Ancillary rooms in the Old National School available for the community hub. To date grants and fundraisers have reached approximately €600,000.

To get in touch with the Data Hub please contact Jimmy McClearn (087) 254 8723, Marie Porter (086) 1706726 or Marina Moran (086) 826 1559.



Marie Porter Secretary Killimor Data Hub



Killimor Data Hub Work Stations



Canteen Killimor Data Hub

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COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS FINISH GRAVEYARD PROJECT

BY JACK TREACY

Creagh Community Council announced recently that it is bringing to an end over twenty years' involvement in the maintenance and upkeep of Creagh Cemetery.

In 2000 the late council member, Kilgarve's Tom Ward and a loyal-group of fellow-workers refurbished the North Graveyard as a Centenary Year project. The work involved the removal of decayed trees, a lot of overgrown foliage and the restoration of the ruins of two churches. This graveyard was fully refurbished in 2013 when fallen headstones were re-erected and subsided graves were fully restored.

The same year saw the refurbishment of the other graveyards by Creagh Community Council, the installing of a crucifix and a display unit at the main entrance, which contains and map and short history of the cemetery.

Over the past eight years local volunteer community members maintained the five graveyards and ensured they were in top shape. Creagh Cemetery has a rich history stretching back over eight hundred years and was visited pre-Covid 19 by many overseas and local people annually.

The Council worked with some small upkeep grants from Galway County Council and in latter years collected subscriptions from families who have plots and graves there, to cover maintenance costs of plant, mowers, strimmers, fuel, sprays and landscaping materials. In the early years operatives from various community employment schemes were engaged.

"Effectively from April to late October there has been a weekly dedicated crew of volunteers who cut grass, and maintained the upkeep of the communal areas and indeed many historic plots" explained Chair John Molloy.

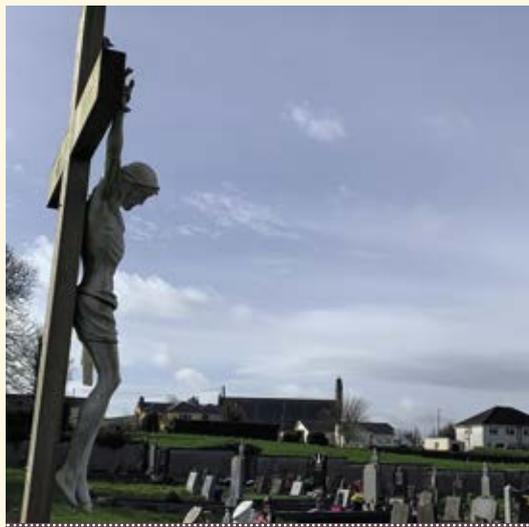
Despite inferences that there had been a fall off in donations, insurance problems or new regulations from the Local Authority, John is keen to stress that there was huge continuous local support from families with subscriptions and donations. "I can assure you that people were posting donations for last year and this year to us during the lockdowns and



Creagh Graveyard

we have always been hugely grateful for their strong support for our costs of equipment and insurance but – the site is getting bigger and busier and we have decided that we have to focus our energies on other neighbourhood projects" states John.

In announcing its decision to hand over the maintenance of the cemetery to the Ballinasloe Municipal Council and the Parish Council, they believe the time was now right for Creagh Community Council to concentrate on other needy projects in the community such as keeping the environs clean and green and encouraging everyone in the community to do their part in making Creagh environmentally friendly.



Donated Cross overlooking Church

"We hope that after two decades of volunteer effort; the appropriate authorities will not allow any deterioration of the cemetery to take place and showing respect to those interred therein" stated John.

"On behalf of all who have an interest in the cemeteries in Creagh I wish to express our gratitude to Creagh Community Council and helpers for the great volume of work that has carried out in the cemeteries over the past eight years. Volunteers have given most generously of their time, energy, and resources over that time span and the fruit of their labours has been plain for all to see. We now need to continue to maintain the standards they have set and if you have ideas or suggestions in this regard please make contact" stated Fr John Garvey.

BREDA AND THE WILD GEEZE

BY JACK TREACY

The Wild Geeze are an Irish LGBTQ comedy duo producing a podcast named Good Grief.



Breda Larkin and Laura Lavelle

Starring Breda Larkin from Ballinasloe and Laura Lavelle, the Podcast focuses on loss and trauma and thanks to the pair's morbid humour and natural ability to entertain has seen the podcast gain an overwhelming reaction with a large number of regular downloads. The comedic duo have felt that they truly are striking a

unique chord with their audience and hope that it aids those who are struggling.

"We have created the podcast we wished existed when we were going through the height of our grief. To hear from our listeners that the podcast is bringing them huge comfort and learning on their own grief, is hugely gratifying" states Brenda.

Breda has also gone further with "10-10-20 The Land on Drugs" hosting another successful webinar on March 18 in conjunction with Talamh Beo. This original and thought-provoking yet light-hearted look at synthetic fertiliser and its effects has Breda is at the forefront trying to change the course of agriculture.

Check out the Wild Geeze Podcast on Spotify at

https://open.spotify.com/show/3khfGYfYfJsMzCsX6UCC0f?si=5ITS6RfQSlasi_UQQFQCXg
watch for updates on The Land On Drugs on www.talamhbeo.ie

BOC SUPPORTING COMMUNITY SMILES!

BY JACK TREACY

Brothers of Charity (BOC) services based in Ballinasloe have been kept busy the last few months working on numerous community projects to bring a smile to those who need it the most.

One of these projects was with Kiltormer Nursing Home where they have teamed up to craft window boxes, birdhouses, indoor plant displays and St Patrick's Day cards from scratch, for the residents of the nursing home, in particular for their window visits on St Patrick's day.

The main aim was to involve the people supported by the projects, giving to those involved a sense of purpose and being able to contribute to their local community during this pandemic.

The window boxes and birdhouses were made in the Viewpoint Resource Centre. They were then planted by a group of people supported by BOC in CARO and CROI services. The ladies in The Oaks residential house created beautiful house plants displays for those in the nursing home who may not be mobile so they could have something beautiful by their beds. The St Patrick's Day cards were made by the Resource Centre and CARO day services. All were delivered to Kiltormer Nursing Home activity Coordinator Claire Kearney in time.

The Group have been kept active recently getting involved in the campaign to propose the Greenway routes one or three through the town. Getting out and remaining active is key to healthy living and Karen Breen and Darragh Flynn were at the forefront of that

keen to let their community know how essential it was to get their submissions in before the deadline, filming a video showcasing their enthusiasm.

Viewpoint has also involved itself in Ballinasloe Town AFC 70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge with Patrick Staunton continuously raising money and getting out walking. A die-hard Liverpool fan, Patrick has been well equipped with the challenge, getting out in the dire weather to complete his challenge. Patrick has had his progress noted on the Accessibility Facebook page throughout last month.

For the next few months, BOC Galway will continue to link in with the people who use social services and other residents in local nursing homes to try and bring some sunshine to their day via a window box or a call with a song.

Those who attend the services want to be involved in projects that support the local area during this time as they have the time and energy to give especially to those who are feeling lonely. People with disabilities were once seen as a vulnerable group in society and with a want to change perceptions. Many in the service contribute to their local call and have done so over the past year through working with other groups such as Accessibility Ballinasloe distributing care packs to those with disabilities at home and local nursing homes and fundraising for local charities.

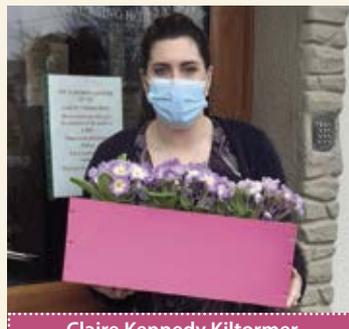
Any ideas you think might suit or if you would like further information please contact Deborah Gill, Social Care Leader, on (090) 964 3405 or email them at viewpoint@bocsi.ie



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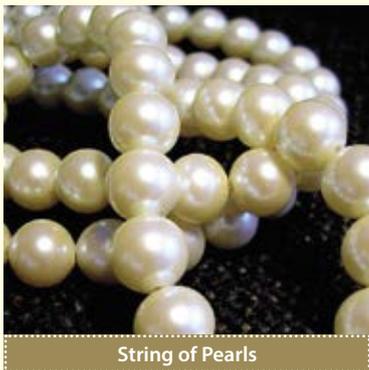
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Some of the best-known varieties are: Natural Pearls, Cultured Pearls, Fresh Water Pearls. The Natural Pearl arrives as a result of a parasite that works its way into an oyster, and the shellfish uses a fluid to coat the visitor.

The fluid is nacre and it is layered many times over the parasite, until the lustrous Natural Pearl is formed, taking between two to four years at least. The result of a pearl's shape and size depends on the rate of the nacre. It is believed that the natural pearl is very difficult

to find as approximately only one in every ten to twelve thousand oysters will produce one fully natural pearl. This can be the reason that Natural Pearls are so expensive; and difficult to find at a fair and reasonable price.



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A pearl is a "living" organism making it absorbent, so external factors can influence its condition and colour such as oil from the skin, makeup, perfume and tan lotions. If well-looked after, pearls can stay in families for generations with no end to their life and their beauty

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INVOLVE - STILL THERE FOR YOU!

BY JACK TREACY

Involve Youth Service Ballinasloe (IYSB), located on Dunlo Street, provides youth-led programmes and activities two days per week to their target group of young people aged from 10-24.

The group, focuses specifically on members of the Traveller Community with a look of providing equal opportunity. Programmes are delivered through a variety of methodologies ensuring equal opportunities and all capabilities are addressed.

Involve Ballinasloe has a team of five staff including: Service Co-Ordinator, Youth Worker, CE participants and volunteers. The service operates 14 hours per week and provides programmes that promote youth development, empowerment, increased confidence and knowledge and support integration within mainstream services and wider society.

Pandemic has led to the temporary closure. This created a huge challenge to the service and left almost 80 young people without access to a youth project, which has been a consistent support service in their lives on a weekly basis. Their new aim was to develop an engagement strategy to establish methods of communication and interaction with existing youth members and all young people who required support during the lockdown and in full adherence to guidelines.

The brainstorming began and included collaboration between the Involve Team, young people, their families and other relevant services. This led to two main methods of engagement: Online Support and Activity Pack delivery. This ensured consistent communication and the opportunity for support and to check-in while they are delivering the packs.

Since March 2020 Involve, with the financial support of local organisations and TD Claire Kerrane, have prepared and delivered over 400 activity and wellbeing packs to young people and their families in town.

Support is available five days per week and six online programmes are delivered weekly.

Senior members who took part in a four-day Mental Health and Wellbeing Residential programme in July and have since established



L-R: John Cawley (CE Participant), Karen Campbell (Youth Worker), April Costello (Involve Youth Service Galway Co-Ordinator), Pamela Fallon (Volunteer)



Mia Naughton Pancake Tuesday

a support group for the younger generation's mental health.

A senior action group has been formed and meet every eight weeks to discuss challenges and opportunities. Junior groups within the association are part of the Junior Jury Book Club in collaboration with Children's Books Ireland. A scheme labelled 'Borrow A Laptop' offers to members, ensuring online programmes are accessible to all young people.

The Team are really appreciative to their members that gave full effort continuously throughout these unusual times

For further information please contact IYSB Co-Ordinator April Costello 083 1798774 or Involveballinasloe1@gmail.com



Zoe Ward and Karen Campbell Delivering Action Packs

CYCLEWAY MOBILISES HUGE SUPPORT

BY JACK TREACY

There have been over 11,000 submissions from young and old all over Galway in the routes proposed for the Galway to Athlone Cycleway.

The community showed phenomenal support for the campaign with many businesses, residents, clubs and societies showing their preferences for Green Route number one and Blue Route number three; creating videos showcasing the heritage, history, culture and stunning scenery of the hinterland and spreading the word to ensure that the Greenway comes through town.

Original Campaigners Antoinette Beegan Gallagher and Alan Harney (whose advocacy got the Greenway Office to be located in town) and their colleagues across a patchwork of interests should feel very encouraged by the civic pride and support shown.

Their original fbook campaign site attracted over 2,000 followers and the Ballinasloe LIFE Video Project saw nearly 21,000 people watch some 16 clips of beauty and encouragement. Many of the Community Councils and development groups associated with the different routes and key supporting businesses all got behind the submissions. All of the schools were contacted and many of the most endearing and passionate submissions were made by school children, in their own handwriting, from some of the National Schools.

Senator Aisling Dolan hosted two public consultation meetings during the campaign – one for Green Route One and the other for Blue Route Three. There were close to 100 people in attendance for each night, showing the level of interest and enthusiasm for routes through East Galway. Community Groups, Farmers, IFA representatives, Local and National representatives all attended to hear more and ask questions at these events.

Senator Dolan stated: "I truly believe this will be a gamechanger for our region. Bringing safe places to walk and cycle for our families as well as a boost and potential for off-farm income with accommodation, food and craft industries – passing trade which will keep our local pub and shop open. With innovative possibilities for selling homemade wares, there are huge opportunities for farmers and their families."

TD's also gave their Support for Routes One and Three and local Cllr Evelyn Parsons major part in promoting the support for the routes.

Denis Naughten TD stated "This is a project which has the ability

to transform communities just like the railway did during the Great Famine."

Claire Kerrane T.D., with her new offices in Bridge St., noted: "This is a huge opportunity for the town, for locals and brings major tourism potential."

The Cycleway Project have now 6 Public Liaison Officers (PLO's) in place to meet face to face with landowners and will finalise upon meeting all landowners, particularly difficult in lockdown. The timeline for a final corridor decision is anticipated in Q4 2021.

For questions, please do contact the Galway to Athlone Cycleway Project Team based in Ballinasloe at (091) 509 267 or on www.galwaytoathlonecycleway.com



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PUBLIC FACILITIES NEEDED

BY JACK TREACY

Cllr. Evelyn Parsons pleaded at last month's municipal meeting for Galway County Council to upgrade Ballinasloe's public toilet and handwashing facilities. Essentially to provide for the public's growing outdoor lifestyle and to support public health COVID advice. There are no facilities reliably open for people to use or wash their hands and this is set to remain the case as hospitality venues remain closed for extended periods. Parsons said: "There's a huge rise in running walking and cycling activities in our town at present and many participating in

worthwhile fundraisers, however some residents tell me they would not use our public WCs in their current state. How can we expect to safely accommodate our community's reliance on outdoor lifestyles let alone welcome cyclists, walkers and tourists? We cannot afford basic public infrastructure to lag behind as Ballinasloe needs to play a major role as the economic driver for the wider East Galway area to attract business and job creation,". When society opens up and food is permitted to be served outdoors, Cllr Parsons added "local businesses need to be in an immediate position to attract outdoor diners, and those diners will need proper accessible toilets and handwashing facilities."

EGAN WINS \$20 MILLION RACE

BY KEN KELLY



David Egan Celebrates Saudi Cup Victory

David Egan won the world's richest horse race, the Saudi Cup, when he rode Mishriff to victory in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The John Gosden trained colt, owned by Prince Faisal, overcame the challenge of two American horses to gain victory in the nine furlong race to win the \$20 million race. Wearing number 11, Egan's ride, wearing the silks of Prince Faisal, was one of the fourteen starters in the world's richest horse race at the King Abdulaziz Racecourse.

The 21-year-old, who is son of John and Sandra Hughes (his mother is one of the famous Kildare-based racing family), is also a grandson of Kieran and Eileen Egan, Birchgrove, Ballinasloe. He followed in his father's footsteps as a successful jockey in England who was also in Riyadh to cheer on his son to victory.

Afterwards David said "It was just unbelievable to win this coveted trophy. Trainer John Gosden had confidence in me to ride the horse that was runner-up last year. I want to thank all the people in Kildare and Ballinasloe who encouraged me over the years to persevere in this sport that has taken me to many parts of the world. But winning in Saudi Arabia is like a dream."

Racing has been in David's blood since he was born. His 52-year-old father, John, has ridden over 1,000 winners on the flat while his mother, Sandra, trained the winner of the 2015 Irish Grand National, Thunder and Roses. His grandfather, Kieran, has been well known on the pony racing circuit throughout Ireland for many years-a sport he introduced his son John to, at an early age.



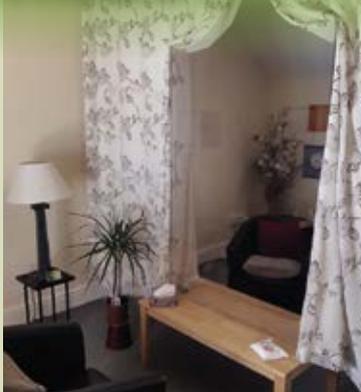
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Amanda and Valerie Darcy
Fundraise For Crumlin

Two Ballinasloe sisters, Amanda and Valerie Darcy ran a crèche together for 25 years on the Creagh Road. Having taken early retirement in 2017, they were both keen to do some good with their time. It was when they found a stock of balloons, unused from their crèche days, that a fundraising idea was born. They decided to do a once off sale of these balloons for charity.

“We had never done anything like this before, and had no idea what we needed to do to get set up. We first of all chose the charity and put in a call to Children’s Health Foundation Crumlin. We

spoke to one of the Communities Team who guided us on how to start the process and get registered with them, along with receiving a support letter for our fundraising. The team also sent us out some of their branded tops, posters and newsletter which helped us talk about where the funds help in CHI at Crumlin. They also advised us that that we would need paperwork and permits to sell the balloons and so went to our local Garda station, they were so helpful in sorting out permits for us. We then contacted some shops to find out if they would allow us to sell the balloons

outside” explained Amanda. “We had no idea what to expect on that first day, we brought 28 balloons with us and set up outside the shop in Tuam – within 7 minutes we had sold out!

We couldn’t believe it, people just loved the balloons. After the success of that first day we decided to keep doing it. We love being out in the community and meeting people, its great fun and we are doing it for a great cause. It really is magic, the balloons sell themselves” said Valerie.

Since 2017 the sisters, who are daughters of Patsy and the late Dermot Darcy, have raised an amazing €20,020.68 for CHI at Crumlin. This money supports the vital work happening at CHI at Crumlin each and every day.

Their work and generosity has been praised by the Dublin Hospital and said their fund-raising donation will greatly help many children in their care.

50 BED WARD GOES TO TENDER

Saolta has announced that the new 50-bed ward at Portiuncula University Hospital has progressed to the next stage of development. Contractor Selection had closed on March 25, and soon tenders will be issued to the shortlisted panel. Enabling works are expected to be completed by July with construction on course to begin in August.

The construction of the new unit will allow for higher admission into the hospital and allow more patients to receive the care they need.

Denis Naughten stated: “The fact that Portiuncula hospital is down 10% of its beds at the moment due to COVID restrictions at a time where there is unprecedented demand on the hospital and the last thing we need is further delays. It is imperative that this project is given the priority it deserves within the HSE and that contractors are appointed as soon as possible.”



Van Dijk International Architectural Concept of new 50-Bed Ward.

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Lockdown living has seen more of us walking, running and cycling around lanes and trails not normally travelled and since the New Year the level of littering and flytipping from the town centre out to the bogs and burbs has increased hugely.



Eric Informs National school pupils gardening and recycling

So too has the public's awareness of environment and some leading community activists who are leading the fight back in reclaiming our local from litter.

Eric Naughton a native of Newtown, Creagh, has been battling the issue of illegal dumping for the last two years, sick of seeing rubbish lining the streets and filling our bogs and decided to take action against it. Whenever he has a spare hour or so before work or in the evening Eric grabs his gloves, picker and bags, and he would start filling up bags.

The 42-year-old horticulturalist focuses on working on the flower beds around the municipality, trimming back shrubs and putting down matting stone and final works as part of the day job with Ballinasloe Training for Employment.

Due to current restrictions Eric, a keen member of the Tidy Towns Association, has ventured out on his own making sure that the

work does not go undone clearing the hedges, lanes and the bogs in the hinterlands. "Covid has made this situation worse. Some people do not have bins, other people... a lot of people just do not care, they just throw their rubbish here, there and everywhere" explains Eric.

There is always so much those at home can do to assist clean-up, but the utmost important factor is awareness. Fly-tipping and theft can be reported to the Gardai, local councillors and the Litter-Warden, Seamus Goldrick.

"The good thing about Facebook and social media is that it is making people aware, Littering is still as bad as it has been for the last 20 years but now that social media is utilised people are noticing it more which is the first step" states Seamus.

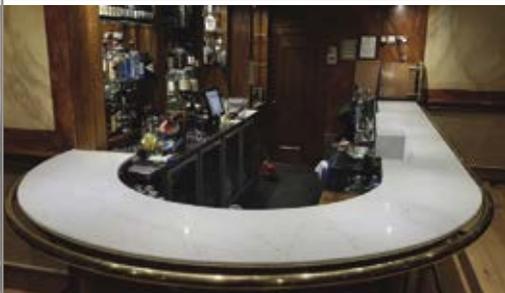
Eric has pleaded with the community and the Council for the instalment of cameras around the town along with the installation of more bins to encourage the locality from throwing their litter everywhere.

More action is needed to be taken against fly-tipping. Councillor Evelyn Parsons has also got involved calling the issue of dumping "A pandemic in itself." The Councillor warns: "Illegal dumpers, fly-tippers and indiscriminate litterers beware – this behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Time is coming to put your own house and your waste contracts in order, or you will be caught."

At the Recycling Centre in Poolboy, it is possible to empty a car for as little as €3.50 and a car with a trailer or a van can be emptied for €5. On top of this Councillor Parsons has stated that the issue of GDPR has been a real stumbling block in preventing illegal dumping but the Government is working on a legislative bill that will by-pass this issue.

The council is employing two new waste enforcement officers to help in the efforts as well as pledging for personal residence and businesses to in future have to present proof of waste disposal to source the problem and target the offenders.

"I am very grateful to Eric for the huge community good he is doing, there are others too, and, of course, our litter warden and



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outdoor and environmental council staff. I have it confirmed that the council is employing two new waste enforcement officers to also help in the efforts", states Cllr. Parsons.

Seamus Goldrick also commended Eric: "The work that Eric has done is phenomenal, it also shows the type of material that is dumped. I'd say 50 percent of what goes to the landfills is fully recyclable."

Dog fouling bag station bags have recently been installed. They can be found in Ashfield Drive, Coral Leisure, The Fairgreen, Brackernagh, Poolboy, Outside St Michaels and in Creagh. A large portion of credit has been given to Litter warden

Seamus Goldrick: "We have erected many dog fouling signs and doggy stations throughout the town containing bags to enable those to pick it up. It has received a positive response." Fines for failure to pick up dog faeces can range from on the spot €150 fines to €3,000.

For many, recycling is just throwing whatever plastics, papers and glass into the recycling bin and waiting for the Binmen to come to collect it every fortnight but Eric has different plans for his recyclables he has been able to transform how he lives using leftover glass and plastic. He re-uses bottle caps to make a fantastic set of blinds and encourages the use of bottles as growing pots for flowers and vegetables and also as eco-bricks with the possibilities endless.

In the next few months, Eric hopes to be able to get back into



Litter Warden Seamus Mc Goldrick



Eric Naughton

schools to teach kids how they can reuse their recyclables to prevent all this unnecessary rubbish from going to the landfills for incineration.

Eric had collected more than 32,000 cans and bottles across last year, but this year Eric has set sights on an even bigger target of 100,000 cans and bottles. As of writing Eric has collected 16,615 cans and glass bottles which amazingly surpassing the halfway mark of his last season tally!

"You think 100,000 is a lot but every week you go back and there are more and more, then when you go out of town to the bogs it is never-ending. If you cannot find a bin, please bring it home and put it in your own bin", he urges.

For those who would like to get involved in tackling illegal dumping and to assist the effort to keep our community clean An Taisce National Spring Clean resumes throughout the whole month of April. Visit www.nationalspringclean.org to register your group and An Taisce will send bags, pickers, gloves and high vis vests covering all the gear you need to help.



Flower Beds Maintained by Eric, Outside Creagh Graveyard



Councillor Evelyn Francis Parsons (IND) Assists in Town Clean-Up

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TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPS

BY JACK TREACY

Ballinasloe Training for Employment (BTE) is a Community Employment (CE) Scheme with a primary focus on further training and upskilling for those seeking to start or rejoin the workforce.

Based in the Enterprise Centre in Creagh and working with over 12 non-for-profit community groups locally, the Scheme can also facilitate those who want to enter a completely different industry.

Once a part of the CE Project a placement within the locality is organised. Those looking for certain career choices are accommodated as much as possible in the placement they are given, ensuring some academic and practical upskilling. The person also feels achievement that when their time on the project is finished, they hopefully have helped the local group to be in a better position. Sometimes the person stays involved as a volunteer with the group helping out in some way, post placement.

The average stay on the project is one to three years depending on whether the person is completing a major award for over 55's and over 62's different criteria apply. In a lot of cases, people leave due to finding employment. In the past few years due to training, the high quality of work experience offered most attendees are finding good positions at the end of their programme.

Once on the project the person works with the supervisors to update their CV, identify training, and look for part-time work. The bonus of being on a Community Employment Project is that you can work part-time outside your CE hours and earn extra money. This helps the person financially and improves their CV and they network with local employers. Local employers have been gracious in taking on staff part-time and hiring others full time. This has



Ballinasloe Training for Employment Administrative Offices at Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre

the added benefit of keeping people working in their local area.

The weekly wage is set by the Department of Social Protection and is €225.50 minimum for a 19.5 hours week. Other secondary entitlements such as rent allowance and medical cards can be held onto as well or assistance in applying for secondary benefits they may be entitled to. If the person has qualifying children or dependants this figure may rise. Hours can vary and are flexible to allow people to work to maximise the benefits of their time on the project.

The organisation have been grateful to obtain extra funding and support to cover costs not covered by the Department from local groups such as Galway Rural Development, St Vincent de Paul Education Fund, Galway Roscommon Training Board, and Ballinasloe Credit Union. Local training

providers are used where possible to support local and are grateful to have such training providers as Dave Flynn and Associates, Bridie Dolan and the College of Further Education amongst others.

"We would like to thank the Department of Social Protection for their continued assistance and to all the local community groups who support us and provide excellent high-quality work experience for our participants. To all the local employers, business people, groups that we network with and employ or refer the people we are grateful to. It is fantastic to see so many local people supporting local," states Patricia Tierney, Assistant Supervisor.

Currently, several positions are still to be filled in the project working with the various groups. If you would like more information on the Community Employment Project contact- Billy Ward on (089) 233 5197 or Patricia Tierney on (087) 917 6541.

THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER...

BY KEVIN KAVANAGH

18-YEAR-OLD DARA COSTELLOE has joined the Academy of Premier League side, Burnley, in the English football League. Son of Grainne Cahill, formerly of Society St., Ballinasloe and husband David, Dara was the youngest ever player to appear for Galway United when he joined them at 15 years of age from Limerick junior club, Annacotty. Dara made 17 appearances for the Galway Club since August 2018.

BALLINASLOE GOLF CLUB was one of the nine Galway Golf Clubs to benefit from grants provided by Sports Ireland. They received €24,900 of the €200,000 allocated in Covid grants from the club resilience fund. The club has been closed to members for the past five months and hopes are high that it will open in April

IN JULY 1846 a letter appeared in the "Western Star" newspaper "complaining about men and boys bathing naked in the Grand Canal at Poolboy on the Sabbath. The letter writer claimed that "ladies" aboard the fly-boats (passenger vessels) were appalled at such a spectacle." The paper also reported that a month earlier a youth, named Denis Doorley, had drowned in the River Suck.

JOE KILGANNON from Caltra, who has passed away, was a

former Garda Chief Superintendent of the old Roscommon-Galway East Division. Born in 1939, he joined the force at the age of 20 and served in Dublin, Athlone, Tuam, Galway etc.

THE JOHNSTON family, originally from Derrymullen, Ballinasloe suffered a double bereavement when two of them passed away on the one day. Anne (Moran) a former employee of John Wood & Co. in Main Street, died in Liverpool while her older brother, Tony, passed away in Kilkenny a few hours later. Both were predeceased by their parents Tommy and Mary Johnston. Anne and Tony are survived by their spouses and children as well as their brother Joe (Aughrim), sisters Maureen Quinn (Sligo) and Bernadette Maguire (Ballinasloe).

OLD NEWSPAPERS. "Many people take old newspapers, but few preserve them; yet the most interesting reading imaginable is a file of old newspapers. It brings up the very age, with all its bustle and every-day affairs, and marks its genius and its spirit more than the most laboured description of a historian. Who can take a paper dated a half century ago, without the thought that almost every name there printed is now cut upon a tombstone at the head of an epitaph?" From the Western Star and Ballinasloe Advertiser of 21st March 1846

Answers to Crossword 104: Across: 5-Geraghty, 8-Pancake Ward, 9-Forde, 10-Aughrim, 11-Carmel Grealy, 14-Burnhouse, 16-The Shamrock, 17-Cyril Dunne, 18-Lourdes, 19-The Blacks, 20-Riddell. Down: 1-Parochial, 2-Correen, 3-Acalla, 4-Mike Kelly, 6-Godfrey, 7-Ray McLoughlin, 12-Red, 13-Inky, 15-Mick Lillis. **THERE WAS NO CORRECT ENTRY TO CROSSWORD 104.**



The Pandemic Experience

I asked a student who is in fifth year in secondary school a few questions relating to our current experience and the following are her responses. I have not altered her replies in any way. I take this opportunity to wish you a safe and blessed Easter.

What has been your experience of this pandemic overall?

Overall, and I'm not just speaking on behalf of myself, it has certainly been a very tough time. When you're so used to being around people, going places and actually have something to look forward to, it's very hard to cope when suddenly you can't do any of those things. Being stuck at home and not being able to meet your friends and family is a challenge for many, including myself. This pandemic has affected us in many different ways, both physically and mentally. We have all suffered in some way.

What have you found most difficult?

The hardest thing for me was not having anything to look forward to. Being stuck at home was very hard for me as I couldn't see my friends, my family. I couldn't do any of the things that I used to do. Every day was the same. I experienced a lot of negative emotions and thoughts as a result of being at home, stuck with nothing to do and nothing to look forward to. I wasn't doing great mentally for most days, just like most people, but I tried my best to keep myself entertained and to remain positive no matter what the circumstance is.

What has been positive for you during this time?

Although most of this pandemic is negative, I found a positive. I found that during this lockdown, I had a lot of time, allowing me to work a lot on myself. I didn't have much to do, so all that was left was to do, was to better myself as a person, both physically and mentally, and to be honest, if not this lockdown, I probably would have never had the time to sit down and think, how can I improve?

What can I do that will make me become better, both physically and mentally? I researched a lot and learned something new every day. And so, I think I've changed a lot. I exercised more, I read more, went on walks and overall adapted a healthier lifestyle. I found that when I started to work on myself a bit more than I used to, my self-esteem, self-image and my whole mood improved. I felt great about myself. Even if it was a little accomplishment, it kept me going and created a little bit of happiness, even when there was not much to be happy about.

What do you think you will be doing differently as a result of going through this pandemic?

Even though this lockdown/pandemic is not over yet, it has taught me to appreciate life. Appreciate the people around me and to make the most of life every day. The main thing that helped me through this hard time was hope. Hope and faith. I'm almost 100% sure that if you have these two, you can go through anything. If you have faith in God, as well as hope, I know, speaking from personal experience, anything and everything is possible. It has been a very challenging time, but we can all learn something from this. I definitely learned that you need to appreciate everything that you have, because one day it's here, and the next it can be gone.

Easter Greetings

Rev. John Garvey, Adm., Ballinasloe

Following are the times for the Easter Ceremonies all to take place in St. Michael's Church:

Holy Thursday	April 1 st @ 8 pm	Mass of the Lord's Supper
Good Friday	April 2 nd @ 3 pm	Celebration of the Lord's Passion
Holy Saturday	April 3 rd @ 8 pm	Easter Vigil Mass
Easter Sunday	April 4 th @ 12 noon	Mass



C of I Rector's Easter Message

For the second year on a row, the Christian communities here in Ballinasloe are unable to celebrate Holy Week and Easter together in their church buildings. This is an experience which we share with church communities right around the world, as the lives of people everywhere continue to be turned upside down by the Covid 19 pandemic.

However, in this traumatic experience which we share, we grow in solidarity with Jesus' first followers, whose lives were turned upside down by the arrest and execution of their friend and teacher. On the first Easter Day, they were utterly despondent, as they huddled together behind locked doors. Yet it was to those frightened and broken hearted people that the unexpected joy of Easter first dawned, breaking through the gloom with the glorious light of God's love. It was the light of the resurrection which taught them to see the world in new ways, and to face the ongoing challenges of their lives with renewed hope and courage.

This past year has taught us to look at the world in new ways. Throughout the thick gloom of this pandemic, we have had to train the eyes of the soul to discern the

light of the resurrection breaking through. Without the routine of weekly worship in our church buildings, we have been seeking spiritual sustenance in new ways. As a parish community, we have set ourselves the challenge of getting outside for a walk or run every day, and to use that as a spiritual exercise, as a way of prayerfully reconnecting with the signs of God's love in the world around us. Fr Gerard Geraghty and I have been running 5 kilometres every day to pray for our parishes since the start of the second lockdown, and have clocked up over 800 kilometres each so far. Together, we have been publishing prayer postcards each day, which pair up photographs from the local area with a verse from the week's Bible readings. These images form part of the weekly online services which are uploaded to the *Aughrim and Creagh Parish YouTube channel*.

Even though the doors of our church buildings remain locked, with the eyes of the soul opened, we can read the both the pain of the Passion and the joy of the Resurrection in the world around us. May the light of Christ break into all our lives afresh this Eastertime.

If you would like to receive daily prayer postcards, please email me at reverendjohngodfrey@gmail.com

With every blessing,

Reverend John Godfrey,

Church of Ireland Rector of the Aughrim and Creagh Parish Union.

OUT AND ABOUT

Participants in the BTAFC 70 Miles for 70 Years



Current Senior Team Manager Petie Keighery Pops Into Curragh Grounds



BTAFC Club Treasurer Ellen Egan Bumps Into Patrick Staunton Brothers of Charity



Cait Cleary Kelly with Nephew Cameron Cleary at the Mill Lock Poolboy



The Keane Family Lorna, David, Kyle and Mason Living out in Ahascragh



The Headd Family Loughdown



Fionn and Maebh Duffy Along the Hymany Way



Sarah and Mark Duffy Along The Hyman Way



The Donnelly Family From Dooras Winners of the Lawrencetown Lets Get Active February Fitness Challenge



The Kelly family from Lismany runners up in the Lawrencetown Lets Get Active February Fitness Challenge



Scoil an Chroi Naofa choreographed dance to The Scripts "Paint the Town Green" in Celebration of St. Patrick's Day getting many students from all age groups involved!

Kevin Herm Connolly Song Release: After releasing a new song 'Underneath' Kevin has received great feedback on the song. Critics called it "a beautifully paced and emotionally affecting song that you'll find yourself coming back for more." The song features Bennie Reilly and focuses on the death of a loved one and dealing with that loss. The song already has over 1,000 plays on Spotify.



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OUT AND ABOUT

BROTHERS OF CHARITY SUPPORTING COMMUNITY SMILES!



Patrick Staunton 70 Miles for 70 Years



Nora and Kevin Flowerbox Delivery



Douglas and Maura Rafter (nee Frehill) commemorated their 50th Golden wedding anniversary on St. Patrick's Day. On the 17th March 1971 they tied the knot in Eyrecourt Church and had their wedding breakfast in the Westpark Hotel, Portumna. They plan to have a family celebration with their children Lisa, Douglas, Gordon, Evan, and their extended families when regulations allow.

Una Turns 103 Years Old

Una Ryan was born March 15, 1918, to John and Winifred Moran, Beechill, New Inn, attending the local school there. Una progressed to work as a hairdresser in Loughrea. She married John Ryan in February 1947, living in New Inn for 57 years before coming to Ballinderry Nursing Home, Kilconnell in July 2004. A popular lady always smiling, generous to everyone and did lots of voluntary work. Her front door was always open with tea, cake, music, and dance with everyone welcome.



Una's 100 Year Medallion Received from President Michael D Higgins



Una Celebrates her 103rd Birthday



Cllr Evelyn Parsons held a Special Virtual Tea Party in aid of COPE Galway's Domestic Abuse Service occurring on International Women's Day. Through her Facebook fundraiser, she and the community managed to raise an astounding €540. She gives her heartfelt thanks.



A Mnásome Day - Councillor Dr Evelyn Francis Parsons, Conductor/Composer Eimear Noone and Soroptimist member Myrne Kelly, it was ensured International Women's Day could be celebrated properly. Gathering outside St. Michael's adhering to Covid-19 guidelines the group spoke on the importance of the day in enforcing a message of respect, care and equality for all women, races and religion. *Picture courtesy of G. Stronge.*

St. Michael's Church recently installed a Webcam Camera System so that parishioners and anyone interested can access all daily and weekend Masses in the Church. This has been a major success and Fr Garvey is delighted with the number of people tuning in to watch and be part of the daily Masses, funerals and weddings ceremonies. What is even more surprising is that people from all over the world are viewing and partaking in Masses from St Michael's – especially now during the Covid lockdown. Masses are regularly viewed from the UK, Dubai, Australia and USA just to mention a few locations. The webcam address is: www.churchservices.tv/ballinasloe.

Fr. Garvey said the parish has benefited by the sponsorship of the installation of the Webcam by a local business company KPW Print and he thanked the Kelly family for their generosity. KPW Print is the largest Digital Print Company in the West of Ireland, giving employment to 32 people and are located in Poolboy. It was an obvious opportunity for KPW, who get wonderful support from the local community, through the printing of Posters, Booklets & Memorial Cards etc to say "Thank you"!



Brendan Kelly MD of KPW presenting Fr. Garvey with the new camera.



John Carrig a native of Ballinasloe and founder of the Barn owl project. Pictured holding a juvenile barn owl just after it was ringed in Ballinasloe in 2020.

John Carrig, a native of St Joseph's Place, Ballinasloe, has set up and runs the local Barn Owl Project. Intensive farming, the loss of roost and nest sites, road mortality and rat poison are the main factors in the West having some of the lowest numbers of nest sites and John aims to fix this.

Working with local communities, he hopes Ballinasloe will play a big part in the future of the organisation. Currently, a number of nests have been set up in the town and hinterlands and over the coming year, more nest boxes will be fitted.

Currently working for Thermo-King, Galway, John has been backed over the years by his company, being provided with time off in his campaign to preserve wildlife and they have financed nests.

Having been involved in many wildlife rescue organisations over the last number of years John has taken courses and met some amazing people along the way. Within his Instagram site 'Wildlife Photographer' John has set up many conservation sites and gave him the inspiration to set up and run the local Barn Owl Project which he supports with as much as 35 hours in a given week.

Currently within Ballinasloe and its hinterlands lies six nesting sites out of the 650 countrywide and with breeding season approaching and more people coming forward it is expected that the number of the nest will rise to bring Galway to the top of the country in nesting grounds.

Starting up, John and his crew started looking for new sites in the West, recorded the sites found and ringed the juveniles with John Lusby of "Birdwatch Ireland" as part of the on-going "Ringing" database. Working with the farming community, building nest sites, rescuing Barn Owls and running a soft release site for those that are injured are the main elements of the project.

So far they have been able to rescue 10 Owls but also have been involved in the rescue of many other birds setting out a pathway



Barn Owl Protected Under Irish Law in its Nest, Ballinasloe.

in line with National Parks & Wildlife Service Licensing. The hopes of rescuing many more birds rely on the continued funding of this project. Up to this point it has been mostly funded by John himself, putting over €6,000 of his own money into it and in the town. Cllr Dermot Connolly has partially financed the project.

Looking to the future, they are building a database of all-natural nest sites in the West at the start to give us a better understanding of the best areas for nest boxes and soft release sites.

"Trying to stop the use of rat poison, cooperating with local communities and conservation groups on what needs to be done to help these nocturnal birds in their area. Building on the success of the soft release sites in 2020, we have a team set up, comprising all people who have been involved at some level in wildlife conservation and rescue. We hope that in the coming years we will push this out to cover all of Ireland" explains John. They are hoping to get funding for nest boxes from NPWS in 2021, in the hope to fit up to 300 boxes by the end of 2021 in the start-up area. This is hands-on, meeting people, getting the local population involved and more. An educational visit to local schools is also planned to get the next generation involved.

A nesting heritage site in Galway is planned for this. With the use of volunteers from Galway Conservation Volunteer Group the organisation plan to use volunteers in the area's where nest sites are or where nest boxes are set up to establish themselves within that community.

For those who find unattended Barn Owl Nests, roost sites or sightings, dead or alive, it is asked that you provide the following information: The ring number, Exactly where it was found with a map reference if possible, The closest road number, The date it was found, Pictures, and any other relevant information on the bird or the finding circumstances. You can contact them at: thebarnowlprojectireland@gmail.com or phone (087) 991 0006.



Barn Owl Being Treated at Release Site

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH FOLK CHOIR DURING COVID-19

As the poem says:

*All the choirs are silenced,
The Church bells do not ring
We are all in Lockdown
Only the birds can sing.*

But human beings are adaptable and the Ballinasloe Church Choirs, as choirs have everywhere, found their own way to contribute to the Church Liturgy. Since last March, 2020, churches have been opened and closed, opened and closed and the Ballinasloe people have become experts on 'live streaming'. Sunday Masses, Requiem Masses and Lenten Prayer and Reflection are now being live-streamed at www.churchservices.tv/ballinasloe. St Michael's Church continues to enhance the Liturgy by providing a solo singer accompanied by an organist at the Sunday Masses and Requiem Masses. St. Michael's Church Live Stream has become very popular countrywide and worldwide. Ballinasloe people, near and far, now have the opportunity to connect into their home town church and are proud to do so.

The pandemic has created something new in the Church. People who have not attended Mass since their Confirmation are now turning in. Less edifying perhaps, people are Mass hopping which is a new phenomenon indeed and very interesting. Maybe it brings home the idea of a universal Church. Should local Church streaming continue going into the future? It would certainly be very beneficial for the housebound and elderly.

Masses during the covid are very different and challenging and totally alien for us. As Sean Og and Anne Jordan join in celebrating the liturgy of the Mass through singing and music, it is always apparent how much we miss the presence of the choir members. Each time a hymn is sung, you can still hear the Choir singing out. We are confident that they are joining in and raising their voices from the comfort of their homes. We look forward to the time when all our voices are reunited in the organ loft.

It is heartbreaking watching the bereaved families bereft of their extended family members and their community in our vast Church at the Funeral Mass. With very little personal contact available for the bereaved, the link to music and the ability to choose hymns that reflect the life of their loved one is a beacon of light in these dark times. We feel very privileged to provide this small gesture of comfort. Online books of condolence on rip.ie have replaced the hug or handshake outside the Church. The comforting words of 'I am sorry for your troubles' are no longer uttered. Mourners have to wait outside the Church. The friends and neighbours line the roads of the family home and St Michael's Square after the celebration of the Mass. Removals and funerals are live streamed but it must be overwhelming for family and friends watching funerals alone in other counties or countries.

St. Michael's Church Folk Choir were unable to have their annual Christmas Eve Carol Singing on the street in 2020. However, we did not break the 17th year-old tradition and our carol singing continued for another year virtually, thanks to Ballinasloe Life Facebook Page and all the assistance received from Colm Croffy. This year, Sean Og Hurley, Anne Jordan and Johnny Donnellan represented the Folk Choir and together with our friends, Michael McCullagh and Rachel Goode, Johnny Johnston, Eleanor Shanley and Johnny Feeley and, Emma O'Reilly, we produced a Christmas medley which was available for viewing on the Ballinasloe Life Facebook. A donate site was set up and the money came flooding in. A big thanks to everyone who donated to our online collection and who contributed otherwise. The total amount raised was €3,700 and an amount of €1,850 has been donated to Ballinasloe



St. Michael's Church Folk Choir



Martin Lyons, Philip Connaughton, Sean Og Hurley, Ann Marie Sammon and Joe Staunton. Cheque in the amount of €1850 presented to Ballinasloe Care and Repair - monies raised in Carol Singing Event.



Kay Cunningham Meals on Wheels Co - ordinators receives Christmas Carol Fundraising cheque from Ann Jordan

Meals on Wheels and Ballinasloe Care and Repair. A big thanks to everyone involved and to Valerie Hughes from Galway Bay FM who advertised this production. Hopefully, we will have our full choir, bigger and better, back on the streets on Christmas Eve 2021

St. Michael's Church Folk Choir sing every Saturday night at the 7pm Vigil Mass in St Michael's Church. The present pandemic will end and we will resume our choir practice on Wednesday nights at 7pm in St. Michael's Church. We are, always, recruiting new members. If you would like to join us or find out more about us, you can contact Anne on 087 7443646.

 Writes ANN JORDAN

KAREN BREEN - FRIDAY SONG DAY

BY JACK TREACY



Karen Breen Making The Friendship Cards

For Valentine's day this year, Karen Breen and her friends in the Viewpoint Resource Centre Brothers of Charity wanted to do something nice for their elderly friends who attend Ballinasloe Social Services (BSS) in Brackernagh.

Karen with support from BSS staff member James Murphy volunteered every Tuesday with the Social Services Band. After many months without the possibility of volunteering Karen was sick of it and with the assistance of her friends within the centre and other staff members in Viewpoint. Karen was able to come up with the idea and produce handmade friendship cards for all the people who attend Social Services on a Tuesday including staff and fellow band members in act of love and kindness.



Friendship Card Produced by Karen, Staff Members and Friends

In the friendship card, there was a picture of Karen and James with their contact details asking them to get in touch every Friday from 2pm to 3pm for a music session with them. Karen and James have since received a lot of calls from her friends on a Friday where they sing and Karen takes the chance to show off her musical ability playing her keyboard for them. In turn, some sing a song back to her.

This has become the highlight of the week for Karen and wishes to tell all her friends in the care centre to give her a call on a Friday if they would like a song or a chat at (087) 673 6632. Karen cannot wait to get back into the action of playing live with the band when restrictions ease but most importantly she is really eager to reconnect with all of her friends.

If you would like to get in contact with Deborah Gill, Social Care Leader, at the Resource Centre at (090) 964 3405 or email bsloesocscs@eircom.net for more info.



Karen Breen and James Murphy Practicing Music

BALLINASLOE BREW DELIGHTS !

An Irish Cocktail, named after the town, featuring a dash of floral sloe gin and a citrus swagger from IPA and fresh Lemon Juice, has been mixed by Kieran Montero who has family roots in Brackernagh.

Kieran's Mom is Margaret Montero originally Guider – daughter of the late Councillor and Ambulance Driver, Seamus Guider and his wife Mary.

Kieran co-owns a Boma restaurant in London, and through his 10 years of experience, he has become quite crafty at developing his selection of cocktails

and recently released his 'Ballinasloe Brew' which was named in the UK's The Guardian's "Cocktail of the Week" lately.

Kieran added: "Wrote about Irish whiskey, really great beer, and of course, Ballinasloe! Mix the three together for happiness."



Kieran Monteiro Curator of 'Ballinasloe Brew' (Son of Margaret Guider)



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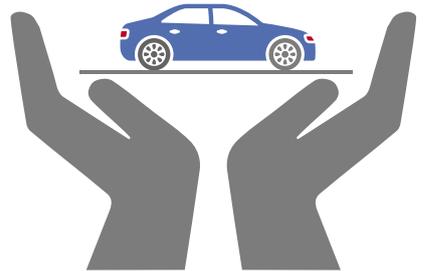
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GARBALLY LIFE 1951-1956 A LOOK-BACK WITH NOSTALGIA

I became a student of the St. Joseph's College, Garbally Park in September 1951. In that school year of 1951-52, there were 179 boarders and 49 day pupils for a total school roll of 228. Ballinasloe contemporaries of mine around that time, some boarders and some day-pupils, included Phonsie Keane, Sean O'Dwyer, Frank O'Meara, Liam Keller, Ken Kelly, Michael McGinley, Martin Clarke, the McCullagh brothers, the McGilloway brothers, Jimmy Mulvey, the Molloy brothers, Gerry Kirwan, Billy Murphy, Brian O'Halloran, P.B. Ryan, Louis Finn, Declan Burke, Ray McLoughlin and Christy O'Byrne. Some of these have died but some are still very much alive and in good health.

Our day was heavily regimented. We rose at 7.00 am for daily Mass at 7.30. There were seven 45 minute classes each week day with four 30 minute classes on Saturdays. In the earlier years, lunch (2 slices of bread with tea or milk) was at 12.30 with dinner at 3.15. Recreation was from after dinner until the rosary bell rang at 4.50. Two and a half hours of study followed until supper at 7.30 pm. A second period of study followed at 8.15 until 9.45. After night prayer, we returned to our various dormitories where lights out occurred at 10.15. Total silence was expected from then until breakfast the following morning!! Corporal punishment was an occasional daily hazard and remained so until the early 1970's.

There was a large household staff under the direction of Miss Delaney, known to students by her nickname, "Apple Annie" from a character the writings of Damon Runyan. Being on her 'good side' was away better than the good side of priests and teachers!

Life in the 1950's did not carry too much excitement. Boarders' routine in those years was punctuated by class, house and state exams, sport, the annual Gilbert and Sullivan opera and the longed for holidays or vacations.

There was no 'dean of discipline' and the priests each did a day on duty in their turn. Thus, one had to be alert to make sure that you were wearing a tie on some days while on other days it was more important to have your shoes polished and shining. Failure to wear 'house shoes' could lead to consequences – foreseen or otherwise!

In addition to normal evening study time, we had an hour of study on Sunday mornings. The official designation of this period was "letter writing". These were generally to our own homes and had to handed up to the priest on duty in an unsealed envelope!

Participation in games was an essential part of school life irrespective of one's sporting ability. One had to be inventive at times to come up with excuses for not 'togging-out.' These ranged from 'having a cold' to 'my football boots are missing.' However, occasionally a reluctant student was discovered to be talented and a successful games career ensued. As well as organised field games the handball alleys were hugely popular and there were rules so that no one group could monopolise the alleys. In summertime the tennis courts were popular.

Garbally's sporting endeavours involved hurling, rugby and athletics. Because of the 'ban', we were not involved in Connacht school titles in hurling so our matches were friendlies against Cistercian College, Roscrea, St Flannan's, Ennis and De La Salle, Loughrea in September and early October. Rugby was the main college game. We had friendlies at Junior and Senior level with Roscrea, Mungret, Crescent, Glenstall and Dalgan Park. There



Bishop John Kirby

were only a few other rugby schools in Connacht at the time: St Joseph's College, Galway known as The Bish; Galway Grammar School and Sligo Grammar School. Thus, the official competition was short enough: generally speaking a semi-final and a final. Despite this, we did not have it all our own way and the competition was tough. Our home venue for these matches was the Rugby pitch attached to St Brigid's Hospital.

Athletics took over in mid March following the closure of the Rugby season. We were already developing a substantial reputation in athletics even at a national level. Fr Kevin Ryle had devoted himself to studying the best ways of developing and coaching the technical events like the hop, step and jump (now known as the triple jump), discus, javelin and pole vault. Internal competitions in April and May helped to discover new talent in these

areas. In early May there was the Triangular Competition involving Garbally, Roscrea and Rockwell with participation at junior, intermediate and senior levels. Then followed the Connacht Sports in mid May and the All-Ireland Sports in late May. In 1954, Garbally won the College of Science trophy outright and tied for it again in 1961. We were very proud of these successes as the competition included all the 'big name' schools.

The annual opera was another major marker in the school year. The Mikado (1951 & 1955), The Gondoliers (1952), The Yeomen of the Guard (1953) and the Pirates of Penzance (1954) were all produced in the early to mid 50's. Ms Lavinia Sheridan the music teacher selected the pupils and did all their singing training over the months from September to December. A professional producer, Mr Lionel Cranfield, came for three days in early December to train the lads in stage movement.

In 1953, there was an unusual addition to the daily routine. Following discussions between the Department of Defence and the Catholic Schools body participation in the F.C.A. became a possibility for students who had completed the Intermediate Certificate. We were free to join or not to join the special school branch. Garbally participated in the experiment and there was a college troop for a number of years. We got the army gear including the boots and the great coat which provided extra warmth as a blanket in winter. We had regular 'marching on parade' on Saturdays and were trained in the basics of posture and deportment. We also learned to handle .303 Lee Enfield rifles and were taken to Carna firing range near Athlone to test our marksmanship. For boys not particularly gifted at sport these outings or 'field days' became a worthwhile bonus. In the summer holidays, we could participate in two weeks of full time training in Finner, Co. Donegal or in Renmore, Co Galway.

Another important occasion was the visit of Fr Peyton the Rosary Priest to Ireland in May 1954. The entire boarding school cohort attended the Rosary Rally, travelling by rail via Attymon to Loughrea. The newly ordained Bishop of Clonfert, Most Rev William Philbin was on the podium with Fr Peyton that day and I understand that the official estimate of the gathering was 20,000. Times have changed since then. That rail link was closed a few years later and the lines were lifted. The road is now the link road from the M6 to Loughrea.

Looking back on it all now, almost 70 years later, we were well cared for.

BISHOP JOHN KIRBY,
Retired Bishop of Clonfert.



AUGHRIM-BORN JOHN COOKE has been honoured with national awards in his adopted Canada for preserving and transforming heritage buildings. Many of these were built by Irish emigrants a century ago. The son of the late Cecil and Nancy Cooke, Craugh, Aughrim, he is a past pupil of Garbally College and graduated in engineering from UCG in 1977 before going to work in the engineering consultancy firm Jennings O'Donovan.

In 1981, John and his wife Mary emigrated to Calgary, Canada, where their daughters, Rebecca and Ciara were born. Later the family moved to Toronto and in 1989 went to Ottawa, which is the Federal Capital of Canada. Four years later John and Mary set up their own consultancy engineering firm, John G. Cooke and Associates.

Now with a staff of 26, thirty years after emigrating, Cookes have a ten-year contract with the Canadian Government for the upgrade of their historic Parliament building complex. It is one of their many projects across Canada, from coast to coast, the company have undertaken as conservation engineering specialists.

The West Block, which now houses the Canadian Parliament for the next fifteen years, and one for the Government Conference Centre, which now houses the Canadian Senate for the next 15 years, won John and Mary's company the national award for the best engineering project completed in Canada in the past year. It was one of the largest heritage rehabilitation projects in

North America and cost in the region of €560 million.

For the €162 million overhaul of the Government Conference Centre, John's company was praised for employing "creative solutions" to balance heritage conservation while meeting current building codes.

The citation read "The project involved rehabilitation, modification and strengthening of the existing heritage masonry and construction of several levels under and above ground within the existing courtyard. Innovative technologies were carefully balanced with conservation principles to address challenges and ensure minimal intervention to the building."

The project impressed the jury for its respect for the heritage characteristics of the building while upgrading the facility to modern building codes, using the latest technology.

John said "For Mary and I, it was an honour to be able to rehabilitate the building built by Irish emigrants 100 to 150 years ago, and ensure that they will continue as a vital part of Canadian Heritage for the next 100 years."

The company also received the Willis Chapman Award from

Consulting Engineers of Ontario in 2019 for the project, which was formerly Ottawa's mail rail station, originally constructed in 1912. Restoration work had started in 2014.

John Cooke's brother, Ivor, is a geologist in Calgary while his sister Valerie lives in Dundalk. His cousins, Robert and Mervyn Cooke, live in the Aughrim area.



Mary and John Cooke at the awards ceremony together with Chris Vopini, Lisa Nicol and CEO chair Christine Hill.

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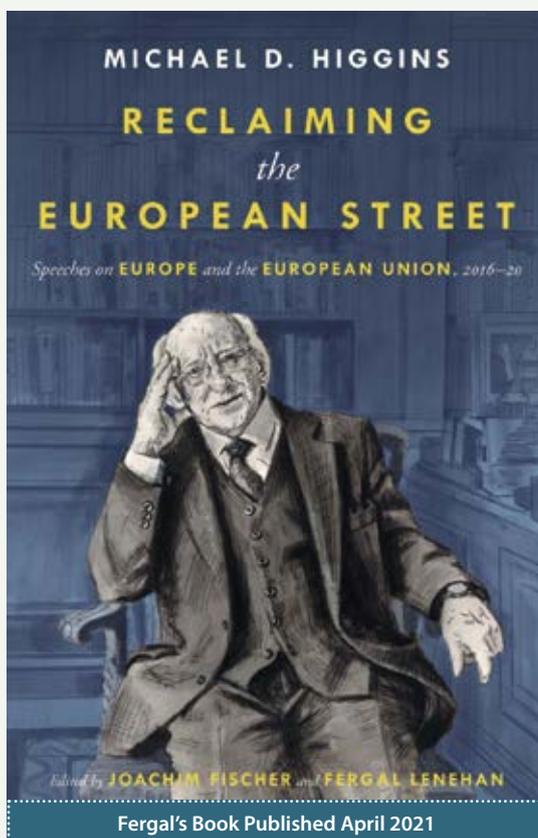
EDITING OUR PRESIDENT'S BOOK

Beagh/ Birchgrove native - Fergal Lenehan is based at the University of Jena, Germany, where he is a full-time researcher at the project 'ReDICO: Researching Digital Interculturality Co-operatively', which is financed by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research. At the start of April 2021 President Michael D. Higgins' book, *Reclaiming the European Street: Speeches on Europe and the EU, 2016-2020*, was published by Lilliput Press in Dublin.

There were, however, more than one name inscribed upon the cover. It also retained my name and that of my Limerick-based colleague as editors. So, what exactly does an academic editor do in an instance such as this? And, perhaps more to the point, how did a German-based Ballinasloe native (that's me), who has never been to Áras an Uachtaráin, has never been actively involved in the Labour Party, and has never actually managed to be in Ireland to vote during a presidential election, end up undertaking this task for the ninth Uachtarán na hÉireann?

I teach at the University of Jena and in 2019 President Higgins visited nearby Leipzig in an official capacity, where he gave an extended speech on the future of Europe. I was teaching a seminar on visions of Europe at the time, had included some essays by Michael D. Higgins in the course material, and it made sense for me, and my class, to go and see the man himself in action. Thus, on a sweltering hot July morning we crowded into a lecture theatre in Leipzig. Through contacts at the Irish Embassy in Berlin, I also organised for my class and I to meet the President for a few minutes afterwards. I told him we had studied some of his work and had come from Jena.

My colleague who also attended said I should send him my book *Intellectuals and Europe* (based on my PhD thesis), as the President would be interested in reading it. I slipped it into the post when



Fergal's Book Published April 2021



Fergal Lenehan Pictured with President Michael D Higgins.



Fergal Lenehan with wife Kirsti and family

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back at work, and then forgot about it.

Sometime in September I received an E-Mail from one of the Irish president's press people: He wanted to talk to me on the phone to discuss my book and was wondering if I was available that afternoon. Unfortunately I had missed the E-Mail. I was at home minding my daughter and hadn't been checking my work mails. "That afternoon" was the day before. I e-mailed back and said that I was available now. Thus, President Higgins chatted to me, sitting in our German rental apartment, on the phone from Áras an Uachtaráin, while my daughter watched Paw Patrol on TV. His first question was to enquire how my daughter was feeling. We then talked about my book, *Sociology* and the research of the President's son. He then, at some stage, asked if I would be interested in working with him on a volume of his European speeches as editor. I said I would and would ask my colleague Joachim Fischer from the University of Limerick to be co-editor. An academic editorship is always better in pairs.

So what does an academic editor do? Like literary and journalistic editors, they often make long stories short. They read texts critically and suggest changes. Unlike literary editors their names often appear on the books. Added to the language-bettering, text-shortening and book-structuring tasks, academic editors manage authors (there are, generally, more than one), decide what articles or chapters to use or not to use, come up with a book's name and, most importantly, often write an introduction, which situates the volume within a wider research and intellectual context. So academic editors are usually authors too, of a kind. But *Reclaiming the European Street* is not just for academics; it's for any discernible reader who wishes to engage with ideas about how society could be run differently, beyond present structures, with the reality of climate change and economic precariousness impinging increasingly upon our daily existence.

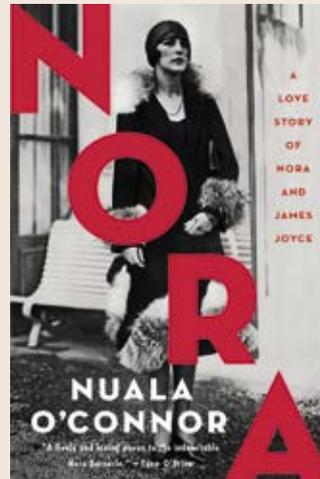
As an Irish person living abroad I can't vote to elect the Head of State, as Ireland is one of the few remaining states not to allow any of their immigrants a vote. Usually "not contributing to society" is suggested as a reason for not consenting to this. I can't vote for the Irish president, but I can edit and contextualise his book. Maybe, just maybe, this is also a small contribution to the future of Irish society.

NUALA O'CONNOR'S NEW NOVEL

Locally based and acclaimed novelist, short story writer and poet, Nuala O'Connor is publishing her fifth novel this April.

Living in Old Mountpleasant, with her husband Finbarr McLoughlin and children Cúán, Finn and Juno since 2005, with their cats Nora Barnacle and Pangur Bán, Harmione (aka Harry) the canary and Pod their Staffordshire terrier pup.

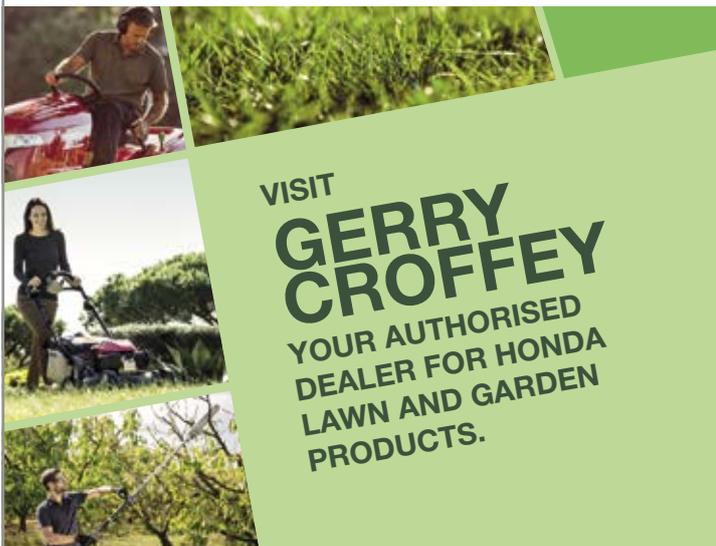
She is the author of four previous novels, including *Becoming Belle* (2018) – based on the last Lady Clancarty who was a commoner and married into Aristocracy at the turn of the 20th century. *Miss Emily* (2015), a reimagining of the life of Emily Dickinson, and seven short story collections, her most recent being *Birdie* (2020). Winning numerous awards throughout her time as an acclaimed writer.



Her new Novel "Nora" focusing on Nora Barnacle, a twenty-year-old from Galway working as a maid at Finn's Hotel in Dublin, when she meets a young James Joyce on a summer's day – which in time became celebrated by Joyceans as Bloomsday and her life.

New Islands Books are the publishers and it's expected on our shelves from April 10, the 70th Anniversary of Nora Barnacles Death.

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TOWN BAND HELP CELEBRATE

BY JACK TREACY

In times of crisis, normally passions and hobbies are there to fall back on, but with band rehearsals suspended across the country for almost 12 months, the members of the Town Band found themselves without this important social and musical outlet for all that creative stimulation.

The past year has been an incredibly difficult time for the band, and this was felt even more during the month of March as they approached the second year in a row of not participating in St. Patrick's Day Festivities in the town.

Our national Holiday Festivities remains as one of the highlights of the year and with this in mind, the musicians of the band, ranging in age from 8 years old to 70 years old, wanted to keep optimism high and accepted an invitation to perform as part of the Bands of Ireland "Play On" St. Patrick's Day 2021 project.

The musicians recorded themselves at home performing the famous Leonard Cohen song "Hallelujah!" alongside musicians from across Connacht and from the 'Band 2 Brigade' in Custume Barracks. All these individual tracks were pieced together, and a very special virtual production was created.

This was one of four performances produced, representing bands and musicians across all four provinces as well as a performance of "Danny Boy" by international musicians throughout the world. The performance was broadcast on St. Patrick's Day between 12 pm and 2 pm during the time that the famous Dublin Parade would normally have taken place and was available to watch for some time after the event on www.stpatricksfestival.ie.

Closer to home – the Band Hall was illuminated in brilliant green by local creative designer and photographer Robbie Riddell for St. Patrick's night.

With outdoor and indoor performances suspended for the duration of the post-Christmas lockdown, Zoom online rehearsals continued twice weekly with groups of senior musicians being led by Senior Band Master Noel Madden, and Junior Band members being led by Junior Band Master Keith Kelly.

Whilst Zoom online rehearsals and tutorials are welcome in keeping up with the craft of musicianship – they are no substitute for group rehearsal.



Town Band Hall Lights up for St. Patricks Day



Ballinasloe Town Band Takes Part in 'Play on For 2021' Connacht

The renovations to the Band Hall came to standstill due to Government restrictions being imposed. It is hoped that rehearsals, performances, and renovations can once again commence with the gradual expected lifting of restrictions after Easter.

The Band performers and Committee will then in line with Govt. guidelines ascertain what might be operational in terms of rehearsal and public performance.

For more information on the town, band visit their Facebook page or their website at <http://www.ballinasloetownband.ie> or email ballinasloetownband@gmail.com

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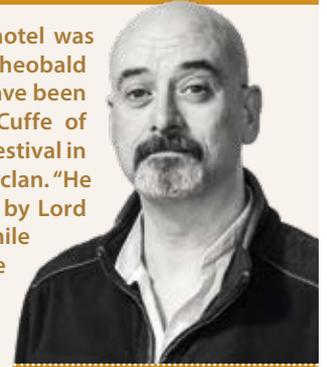
BY JACK TREACY

With much hope that the route to be chosen for the Athlone to Galway cycleway will favour Ballinasloe and so increase visitor numbers to the district, a new heritage guide is set to be launched at the end of this year which would perfectly complement that outcome. Created by Creagh native and landscape archaeologist Declan Kelly, the guide is the fruit of more than 10 years of work and includes over 100 points of interest for visitors to the area. Though he has lived in Portumna for almost 10 years now, Declan has retained an abiding interest in his home town. "Some of my first lessons in history were taken in Creagh cemetery" he says "from reading the inscriptions on the older headstones and then trying to find out what the stories were of the people buried there. Back in the 1980s you had to go to a library and seek out what information there was. Much of this research can now be done online".

Painstaking research has gone into the stories behind those same memorials in Creagh and among the numerous features the guide highlights is the memorial to the family of William Bermingham Costello (1800-1867) who was a renowned surgeon in his day. One of the other interesting tombs mentioned is that of Thomas

Cuffe who died in 1814 and whose hotel was reputedly visited on one occasion by Theobald Wolfe Tone. Declan believes him to have been a son of the famous 'Sir' Thomas Cuffe of Kilbeggan. "The annual Knighthood Festival in Kilbeggan is built about Cuffe", says Declan. "He was an innkeeper who was knighted by Lord Townshend, the Viceroy of Ireland, while Townshend was three sheets in the wind with claret. When Townshend sobered up, he tried to withdraw the honour, but Cuffe protested because he said his wife was delighted at the prospect of being called Lady Mary".

Filled with numerous photographs, the book is to be launched by Gerry Devlin with a foreword written by Cllr Evelyn Parsons who is an enthusiastic supporter of local heritage. "In an everchanging world of cultural fusion, online influences and social isolation" said Cllr Parsons, "Declan Kelly's latest book brings a welcome grounding and is a work of extraordinary historic significance". 'Rediscovering Ballinasloe' will be published locally and available in late 2021.



Declan Kelly

D'ARCY'S 2ND HOT PRESS AWARD



Ballinasloe's Fergal D'Arcy has been announced as Ireland's Best Radio DJ of the Year by The Hot Press Readers Poll. Spending his childhood growing up in Beagh, Birchgrove, he beat off competition recently from all across the country to win, as tens of thousands of members of the Irish public voted for Fergal to ensure that he retains his title.

This is the second time that Fergal has been voted the country's number one DJ, winning it back to back after being named the country's DJ of the Year for the first time in February of 2020.

The 37-year-old occupies the 2 pm to 4.30 pm

slot on Today FM and always attracts big names to his show with this year so far featuring: Masie Peters, Dua Lipa, HAIM, Anne Marie and many more big stars.

Fergal responded to the accolade saying: "Very Humbled to have been voted Best Radio DJ in the HOTTIES with HOTPRESS. Thank you to all those who voted and to those that tune in every day you continue to be the greatest guest on my show."

Fergal also thanked everyone at Hot Press Magazine: "Please continue to be that outstanding force and light that everyone needs in the field of Irish Music."

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Over the last two months, Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre has been busy with its new online live music event Seomra Eile on Thursday evenings, emerging as the first live performance these artists in front of a local audience this year.

Set up by Filmmaker Mike Casey he has been working in collaboration with the artists and the theatre to bring his vision to life and to share his love of Music and Theatre with those at home.

Viewing figures have been increasing with each event and a chance to shine for local artists including: Rachel Goode, Stephen Boyle, Diarmuid Claffey, Chris Feeny, Eanna Maloney, Ben Kelly, Niall Fitzgibbon and Ben Turner. The artists are delighted to have received the opportunity to perform for an online audience with an array of musical talent on display both traditional and contemporary. If you have missed previous performances they become available one week after the live performance on the Town Hall's website.

Seomra Eile for April will commence on April 8 with Dylan Connolly who proved a great hit at the Christmas online concert accompanied by Mark Kelly. The very talented Sarah Corcoran will feature on April 15 alongside Paul Drysdale (Too Tall Paul). Tickets are on sale on the Theatre's ticket office website at €10 each.

Chair Maura Hughes has thanked all those who have responded to their online URGENT HELP APPEAL and donated. "These funds have been vital in the continuous activeness and maintenance of



Eanna Maloney and Ben Kelly Seomra Eile

the Theatre with fixed costs hitting as high as €1,000 a month to just keep the building secure and safe plus insurance" notes Maura.

Volunteers have worked tirelessly for the ongoing redecoration and refurbishment of the theatre, with regular board meetings taking place over Zoom for the progression.

The Indoor Country Market has reopened and is available every Friday between 9 am and 1 pm.

The Theatre is an integral part of the community, not only as a theatre but also as a significant part of the architectural history of the town. So much fun and entertainment have been provided over the years and it has introduced so many young people to drama, dance and music on its stage. Many have gone on to forge careers for themselves in Music and Drama e.g. Emma Moohan, Emma O'Reilly, Fergal D'Arcy, Hannah O'Reilly, Rachel Goode, Sarah Corcoran to name but a few.

Further information and tickets for these online live events at www.ballinasloetownhall.com/booking. Also, watch out on social media pages on Facebook and Instagram for previews of upcoming acts.

If you have a cultural event planned to stage in June or July we would like to PUBLICISE it . Please send your details with a photo to ballinasloelifereporter@gmail.com by May 12th



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FLOORING PORTER BAGS CHELTENHAM'S STAYERS HURDLE

BY JACK TREACY

The Cheltenham Festival is a time of great excitement for the nation and this year it was especially so locally as their very own "Flooring Porter" finished first in the top race the day after St. Patrick's day, bringing great joy especially to all those who backed him.

The racehorse was brought to town by a Birchgrove group consisting of Ed Hogarty, father and son Tommy and Alan Sweeney and relation of Tommy - Kerril Creavan, all chipping in to purchase the horse for €10,000 in 2018. The Hogartys run their Flooring and DIY business, while Alan and Kerril run The Countryman Pub in Creagh.

Ed Hogarty explains "Naming the horse was easy really - since we were selling flooring in Hogartys and the lads were then selling porter at the Countryman's in Creagh - that is how we settled on the name. We never did think, could never dream of this week, you would be hoping to win a handicap in Roscommon or Bellewstown, never mind winning at Cheltenham."

Most locals are familiar with the drama of the race day morning when regular Jockey, Johnathan Moore, who had ridden with him rising through all the ranks had to watch on as Jockey Danny Mullins celebrated the win. Johnathan sustained an injury the week prior during a race in Naas, ruling him out of the tie. "Obviously it was nerve-wrecking, we learned our jockey had to be replaced. We were confident in the horse but nerves were there" stated Ed.

Alan had big hopes: "We had a feeling he would run a big race on the day. He stays all day and the only time he was going to be stopped was at the wall after the finishing post" quipped Alan.

As the race finished and Flooring Porter crossed the line, the jubilation of families, neighbours and supporters of the racing fraternity was unbridled. Doubtless if a tavern or tap was open - Fair Day or Christmas Eve scenes would have ensued. Bobby Joe's win - Aintree in 1999 left Pubs dry in Mountbellew for days!

The town was filled with pure delight especially those involved in the syndicate who are well liked and respected business families. "It was a wild dream to win at Cheltenham... I spent so much time on the phone to my father, my uncle, and to Ed and they are all so excited. Because of restrictions, we will have to wait before a

proper celebration, possibly in trainer Gavin Cromwell's yard" explained Alan Sweeney who made the trek.

Sean Hogarty Senior nearly destroyed the T.V. and sittingroom - such was the exuberance of this elation at the win-watching with his POD in Birchgrove.

Before the race, the six year old bay gelding was given 12/1 odds, a very inviting offer to punters, whilst a few canny track followers got money on in the weeks and days before at 20/1. He left his rivals chasing dust as he finished the race with ease securing a cool €156,000 top prize.

Flooring Porter still has one more Grade One race to go-in Punchestown in April before the end of the season-and the beginning of a well-deserved break.



Flooring Porter and Danny Mullins Finish First at Cheltenham



Some members of the Local Syndicate with Flooring Porter

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BALLINASLOE GAA PREPARE FOR NEW SEASON

This time last year the town's GAA was completely oblivious, as was everybody else, that they would be facing their second Spring in lock-down. However, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel and they look forward to getting the teams back on the playing field.

In the background, a lot of work is going on. A new executive is now in place. Chairman Paul Madden and Treasurer Mark Ward have retained their positions for another year, but hardworking secretary, Gerry Seale had stepped down at the recent AGM. Stephen Kerr was elected in his place.

Paul, on behalf of the club, thanked Gerry "who worked tirelessly on behalf of all codes in Ballinasloe GAA. Stephen has big boots to fill, but he has already proved himself up for the task and we wish him and all our volunteers the very best in their work on and off the pitch in the year ahead."

All executive and committee meetings have been and will continue to be held via social media and plans are afoot for when the go-ahead will be given in returning to activities safely. All Football and Hurling managers have been appointed and ratified and work on the upkeep of facilities are ongoing.

Two Adult Dual players, Odhrán Dooley and John Coughlan, approached the Club Executive to source new jerseys for both the Adult Football and Hurling teams. The lads acquired sponsorship, went about a tender process with various suppliers and with permission delivered two new sets of jerseys. The approved supplier, KC Sports, have established a GAA Shop which can be accessed online, with an assortment of products available. Both Teams have also received subsidised Training Tees and Quarter Zips with the aid of generous sponsorship from the local Credit Union.

Bingo, having been suspended for over a year now, the club is delighted to announce that Bingo is back. Unfortunately, it still can't happen in its usual format at The Emerald Ballroom but it has restarted in its usual slot since Tuesday 23rd of March at 8 pm online. Details on how to buy books and access are available from the Bingo Facebook page.

The weekly Lotto is on-going



(L-R) Odhrán Dooley, Stephen Kerr, Shane McNeill (Ballinasloe Credit Union), Paul Madden, and John Coughlan



Ray Connellan

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(L-R) Odhrán Dooley, Stephen Kerr, Martina Reynolds, Paul Madden and John Coughlan

every Friday at 8 pm. Tickets can be bought online for either just one draw or multiple draws up to 52 weeks, so you need never worry about missing out on a week. The current lotto jackpot stands at €3,400 and increases by €100 every week if the jackpot isn't won. There are also Match 3 Prizes of €100 available.

There are teams of volunteers who run the bingo, the lotto and then there are all the volunteers who coach, mentor, arrange matches, cut grass, line pitches, and washing of the jerseys to name but a few. Without these volunteers, the organisation would be in ruins. Many of those who are involved have played for years and now want to give something back or maybe they have children involved in sport, but they are always looking for people to help out, sometimes in the simplest of ways, it could be taking player registrations or maybe making tea and sandwiches for visiting teams.

For the 2021 season, the club is pleased to welcome two new football coaches – Ray Connellan (U15 Boys Football) and Barry Donnelly (Men's Junior Football).

Ray Connellan is from Athlone and plays football with Athlone GAA and Westmeath. Familiar with Ozzy Rules, Ray played football with St. Kilda in Melbourne and is currently studying at UCD and preparing for the season ahead while Barry Donnelly, a Tyrone native, is a man with a winning mentality. Barry has won titles with Tyrone, Dromore, Stanford and Roscommon in New York and two senior titles in Clare. Liam Gordon is welcomed back to his role as Junior Hurling Manager. Liam is a respected national hurling referee, a member of Killimor GAA and coaches in local national schools.

Throughout the season it is hoped that guest coaches can come from a player and/or coaching background who have a particular skill set to impart to various teams in the club. Coaches continue to learn all the time, picking up tips and new methods from training courses, from other coaches and also from players themselves. Everyone looks forward to watching the teams in action in the summer months ahead

For more info on the Lotto, Bingo, products, and up to date information visit their website at www.Ballinasloe.GAA.ie

Club Membership 2021

- Prices:**
 Student: €40
 Youth: €40
 Adult /Adult Player: €60
 Family: €120



Buy online with Clubforce on www.ballinasloe.gaa.ie

TEAM MANAGERS

Age Group	Football	Hurling	Age Group	Ladies Football
U5/7	Shane Kenny 086 362 4580	Gary Coone 086 387 1872	U6	
U8/9	Joby Kelly 087 631 7817	Gary Furey 087 631 6785	U8	Aisling Coone 087 622 0085
U10/11	Michelle Creaven Kelly 086 197 6254	Damien Friel 087 947 7492	U10	Ronan Campell 087 845 6682
U12/13	Niall Poland 086 858 0919	Damien Ó'Neachtain 087 418 6563	U12	Kathryn Gibbons 087 904 6140
U14/15	Brian Madden 086 083 7283	Kevin Caufield 087 212 2493	U14	Mark Ward 086 301 5746
			U16	Damien Clarke 086 170 4241
Minor U/20	Cathal Coleman 086 826 1655	Brendan Hayes 087 907 3306	Minor	John Mitchell 086 854 8041
Junior		Liam Gordon 087 203 0496	Junior	Paul Madden 087 918 2559

Underage Male Hurling and Football to U7/U9/U11/U13 and U20 From 2021

GARBALLY COLLEGE BOYS RAISE €81,150



Garbally College Students Martin (17 years old) and Shane Glennon (15 years old) raised an astonishing €81,150 in memory of their mother, Cathy Glennon, in aid of Galway hospice, Mayo/Roscommon Hospice and The Irish Cancer Society. Cathy Passed Away on October 8 2020 just six weeks after her cancer diagnosis and the boys honoured by organising a Virtual Tractor Run 'Driving on for Cathy'

THE 70 MILES FOR 70 YEARS CHALLENGE

BY JACK TREACY

As part of the celebrations of 70 years of sporting activity and positive contribution to the community, Ballinasloe Town AFC (BTAFC) have introduced a novel initiative that has been overwhelmingly embraced and indeed supported by the town's general public. In a bid to raise funds for themselves and assist their neighbours in Portiuncula Hospital the "70 Mile for 70 Years Challenge" was initiated.

The initiative which had a theme of '70' has seen that all 150 participants will either walk, jog or run a total of 70 miles throughout March and were sponsored either directly on sponsorship cards or by donating to the fundraiser link. Monies raised will be 70% retained for annual finances with 30% going locally to St. Teresa's Children's Ward in Portiuncula Hospital. Chairperson Joby Kelly stated: "The club decided to donate 30% of all funds raised to St. Teresa's Ward in recognition of the tremendous work taking place at the Unit and also in recognition of the tremendous dedication of all health workers during the current Covid-19 pandemic all of whom have gone over and above in terms of effort.

The 70 miles challenge is most definitely a win/win situation for everyone as it is most certainly helping to lift the doom and gloom of the current pandemic restrictions while at the same time helping out with the fitness levels of all participants. It also has the positive effect of raising necessary finances, while also financially assisting hospital patients.

Chairperson Kelly was delighted to be contacted by Patrick Staunton of the Brothers of Charity Services who expressed a great interest in participating in the 70 miles challenge. After embracing the offer, Patrick has been putting in the miles daily and has secured great sponsorship to date for the event.

Current Queen of the Fair and Soccer representative in this

prestigious local competition, Ashley Walsh, is also participating in the Challenge and is fully embracing the very positive vibes that the event is creating throughout the Community.

On St. Patrick's Day, local runner and former player, Aiden Sheridan displayed an act of sheer endurance in completing the entire 70 miles in a single day. BTAFC's Committee has extended their gratitude to Aiden, Patrick and Ashley for their involvement and also wanted to most sincerely thank each of the 150 participants who took on the enduring challenge.

The latest BTAFC Development Application for Sports Capital Funding has been submitted to the Department of Sport to follow up on a detailed application to the Sports Capital Programme for funding to enhance the two 5 aside AstroTurf pitches. This will involve replacing the present pitches surface and also replacing the perimeter fencing, gates and ball retention netting around both pitches.

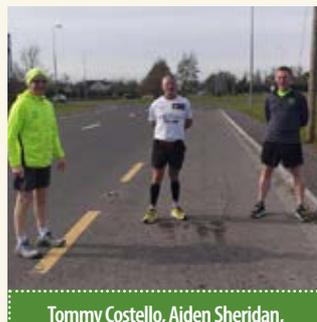
According to Club Development Co-Ordinator Johnny Walsh, this is the latest phase of an ongoing Development Plan which commenced over 35 years ago and which can today boast of a Facility Development worth in the region of 1.75 million euros, which is currently 98% debt-free. This latest phase will cost in the region of €108,000 and there is hope that up to 95% of this total cost will be allocated to them by the Department of Sport.



Salha, Noorah and Adam Gallagher



Noor Patwary



Tommy Costello, Aiden Sheridan, Alan Harney



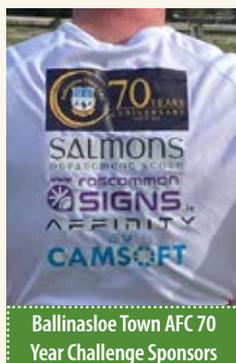
Aiden Sheridan after completing his 70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge in a single day. Pictured with wife Elaine and their children Summer and Alex



Joe Kelly Sr with grandson Keegan



Katie, Callum and Lana O'Connor



Ballinasloe Town AFC 70 Year Challenge Sponsors



Keith Kelly and Fiona McCormack participating in 70 Miles For 70 Years from Dubai



Patrick Staunton (Brothers of Charity) winner of BTAFC Best St. Patrick's Day Themed Photo Awarded €70 ShopBallinasloe Voucher



Aiden Sheridan with BTAFC Club Chairman Joby Kelly



Aiden Sheridan During 70 Miles in one day



Mickey Walsh



Barbara Dowd, Pamela Keighery, and Nora Dowd Portiuncula Hospital Staff Supporting 70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge.

PARSONS SCOOPS ARENA AWARD

BY JACK TREACY

The winners for the Arena Crystal Sports Awards 2021 were announced and Ballinasloe's own International Women's Rugby Player, Béibhinn Parsons was named as the female winner. The youngest nominee, yet to turn 20 years old, has been recognised for her outstanding performances and she has been called up to the Women's Six Nations Championships 2021.

The Rugby Star's hometown support mobilised early and she had over 120 votes on the first day. Irish sports fans worldwide reputation is legendary. Some statistics from the competition noted over 2,000 votes, 250 comments and a total of 490 shares with votes registered from Europe, Australia and the North and South American continents.

A beautiful handcrafted crystal was presented to Béibhinn which took over 50-hours of master craftsmanship, a stunning and extremely special trophy. Great credit must be given to the community for getting behind their homegrown star.



Béibhinn holding Arena Crystal Nations Choice Award 2021

COLM REILLY RE-SIGNS FOR CONNACHT

Ballinasloe's 21-year-old Colm Reilly has been re-signed by Connacht for the upcoming rugby season. Colm was given his first professional contract for the seniors back in June after making a good impression in the academy and making his debut back in November. The scrum-half has become an impressionable player for The Westerners involved in six games so far in the 2020/2021 season, starting two games.

Colm followed fellow Garbally player Conor Kenny into the Senior set up and other recent inclusions to the team from Garbally has seen Óisín McCormack, Shane Jennings, Matthew Devine, and the longest-serving player being Tiernan O'Halloran, making his debut in 2007.

"It is my dream to represent my province and I am looking forward to putting on the green jersey when that day does come. I started playing with Ballinasloe when I was four and played with my brother on the Under 8's team. When I went to school in Garbally, the focus was always on winning the senior cup and once I did that it was another dream come true. I have always been on a pathway in Connacht and have developed from playing club rugby to the Academy and now the Senior team. I want to keep pushing on until I get to put on that green jersey."



Matthew Devine, Shane Jennings, Óisín McCormack, Tiernan O'Halloran, Conor Kenny and Colm Reilly



Shane Jennings, Óisín McCormack and Colm Reilly Ballinasloe Rugby Days

Colm now looks forward to his future with Connacht Rugby with The Westerners taking on Leinster in the EU Challenge Cup on April 3.

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A DECADE OF SPORTING MILESTONES



With so many sports not allowed due to Govt Health regulations , we decided as part of our continued 10th anniversary commemoration to look back through the archives of some of the significant milestones and achievements of many sporting codes and leisure activities that happened sine we first rolled of the presses. Enjoy a nostalgic look back



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135 Years of Ballinasloe RFC



DEC 2011 / JAN 2012
Ballinasloe Handball Club 85 years young



JUNE / JULY 2013
FAI Junior Cup



APRIL / MAY 2014
Ardscoil Sporting Success



APRIL / MAY 2017
Garbally Senior Rugby



JUNE / JULY 2017
Ladies Rugby



APRIL / MAY 2018
Garbally 46th Rugby Title

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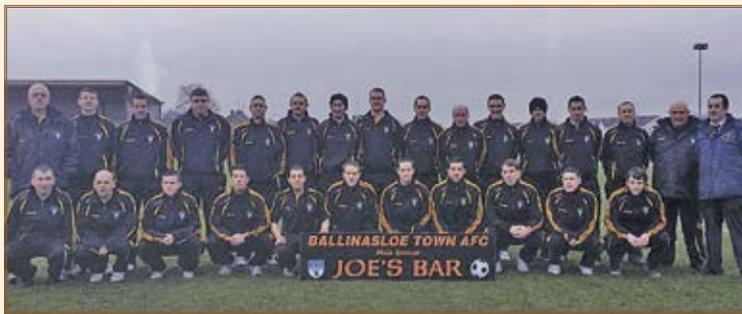
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AUG / SEPT 2012
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APRIL / MAY 2013
All Ireland GAA Junior Cup Club Champs 2013



APRIL / MAY 2014
Ballinasloe Town AFC win Connacht final 2014



JUNE / JULY 2014
New Track building



APRIL / MAY 2015
First Pieta Darkness Into Light



AUG / SEPT 2019
GELS Annual Golf Day



DEC 2019 / JAN 2020
Padraig Pearse's Historic Season of Firsts



DEC 2020 / JAN 2021
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MUSICAL BROTHERS PASS AWAY

BY KEN KELLY



The Kelly brothers in action - Martin on the fiddle and Eddie on the accordion.

With the passing of Eddie Kelly, from Meelick, Eyrecourt, East Galway has lost another iconic traditional musician. The 87-year-old was one of five brothers born to Mai and Martin Kelly who played a number of instruments and wrote 21 compositions, many of which won awards all over the world.

Having gone to school in Meelick, Eddie became a boarder in Garbally College after winning a scholarship there and then trained as a psychiatric nurse in St. Brigid's Hospital, Ballinasloe. Later he moved to St. Patrick's Hospital in Castlerea as a storeman and lived in the Roscommon town up to his death.

Having learnt the piano from his mother in the family home, Eddie quickly started playing the button accordion, the fiddle and other instruments. He was often joined in "sessions" by his late brother Martin while his brother Thomas was a noted singer. Both he

and Martin were members of the Aughrim Slopes Ceili Band and played with the late Paddy Fahy, Dan Treacy, Johnny Hynes and Pat Corbett, among others.

In Castlerea, Eddie started teaching music and even had a band called Eddie Kelly and the Squadrons which took him to venues all over the country. His compositions have been performed at fleadh and traditional Irish music festivals all over the world. He himself had toured Great Britain with Comhaltas groups over the years but due to ill health many of his works were unfinished.

A keen swimmer, Eddie Kelly has been described as "a modest man with a remarkable musical ability, both as a musician and composer. His unique contribution to music places him amongst all the greats and his compilation of his tunes and life will continue to inspire future generations."

Only a year before his passing, Eddie's brother, Martin died in a Kiltormer Nursing Home. He too played a major part in the East Galway Irish Music Tradition, having played with the Jimmy Devery Band and the Echo Ceili Band among others. He frequently teamed up with Eddie and Thomas for impromptu session around the country. They were a formidable trio.

The Kelly brothers, who are predeceased by their infant sister and brother Pat, are survived by their brothers Thomas in Meelick and Seamus in Dublin. Their passing and the recent death of Joe Burke from Kilnadeema has left a huge void in East Galway traditional music culture.



Thomas, Eddie and Martin Kelly at Eddie's 80th birthday party.

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The 100th anniversary of the killing of Aughrim born RIC Constable Thomas Sweeney, in Clifden, in 1921, was commemorated with a Virtual Conference organised by Galway Co. Council in partnership with the Clifden and Connemara Heritage Society.

The uncle of Helen Mannion (nee Fahy) and her brother Joe, who both live in Aughrim, was one of two RIC Constables shot by the Western Connemara Brigade of the IRA on 16th March 1921 when they were ambushed on the streets of Clifden. Charles Reynolds was the other RIC man who was gunned down but Thomas Sweeney lived for another 48 hours before dying in St. Bride's Home in Galway.

Born in "High Street" Aughrim on Christmas Day 1896, Thomas Sweeney was the eldest of four children born to John and Winifred Sweeney. His father was an agricultural labourer and Thomas joined the Irish Guards in November 1915, landing in France in 1916 to fight in World War 1. After being "severely wounded" on duty he returned to the UK and was discharged from the British Army in October 1920.

Later that year he joined the RIC but at 10 pm on 16th March 1921 he was part of a 4-man RIC patrol that was ambushed by the IRA on the streets of Clifden. Longford-born Constable Charles Reynolds was shot down in cold blood and died on the day while Constable Sweeney passed away in hospital 48 hours later.

The ambush was believed to be in retaliation for the hanging two days earlier in Dublin of a young Clifden man, Tommy Whelan. Worse was to follow. In the early hours of St. Patrick's Day, a special train with 30 armed Black and Tans aboard, left Galway for Clifden to exact revenge. While it was dark they looted and set fire to several buildings, resulting in many of the townspeople fleeing in fear, seeking sanctuary in the workhouse and local convent. This terrible cycle of killings was typical of the times and often had tragic consequences for innocent people.

The 24-year-old Sweeney was buried in Aughrim Old Cemetery after his remains were brought by train to Ballinasloe and onward by road to his native village.



Helen Mannion with a photo of her late uncle, Constable Thomas Sweeney.

The opening address at the Virtual Conference, entitled "The War of Independence comes to Clifden" was delivered by Breandan O Scanail, chairperson of the Clifden and Connemara Heritage Society, which included several other speakers.

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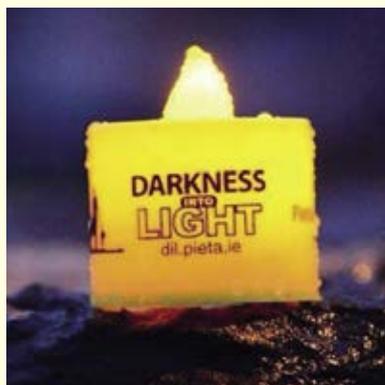
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Iconic Darkness into Light Candle

The Darkness into Light (DIL) 5 km walk is the annual flagship fundraising and awareness event for Pieta House.

Taking place this year on May 8th, it is expected many from the town will take part once again. It funds a free fully qualified counselling service to those suffering from suicidal impulses, those bereaved by suicide and people engaging in self-harm including areas near Ballinasloe, Tuam and Athlone.

ensure that their route is properly lit at the time they plan to take part and that there are no hazards.

Those taking part this year are asked to ensure that all equipment is in good condition, that weather conditions are suitable. High-risk activities should not be attempted alone or without proper support and training. All participants in Darkness into Light 2021 take part at their own risk and should be appropriately insured.

For those in crisis who wish to speak to a therapist contact the 24-hour freephone helpline (1800) 247 247. Help is also available by texting HELP to 5144. Those who wish to make an appointment with a therapist should call (0818) 111 126.

For up-to-date information check out the Darkness into Light website at: <https://www.darknessintolight.ie/> and its corresponding Ballinasloe Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/dilballinasloe>

First locally held to tremendous acclaim in May 2015, this year's dawn walk is taking place on 8th May simultaneously in 15 countries and across 5 continents. Helping to replace suicide, self-harm, and stigma, with hope, self-care, and acceptance by aiding this special sunrise.

Participants can choose to walk, run or cycle on a route and at a time of their choosing or to simply share their sunrise moment. Alternatively, they may wish to take part in the DIL Challenge where the sign-up fee is waived for anyone who pledges to fundraise €150.

The safety of all supporters is Pieta's highest priority, and all participants are asked to ensure that they always strictly adhere to the government's Covid-19 guidelines while taking part in the event. All those walking or running for the event should



Michelle Kelly, Joanne Jordan, Miriam Hurley



Sunrise 2019 Carol, Lorna and Brian Derrane with dog Tory

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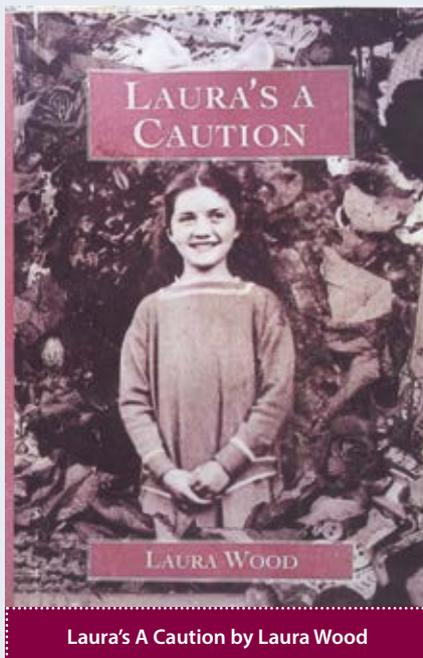
In the early part of the last century, the Presbyterian Church in Ballinasloe had one of the most flourishing congregations in the West of Ireland, according to a book written by Laura Wood, daughter of John Wood, who founded the Main St. business in the late 1800's.

Born in Ballinasloe in 1905, Laura had sisters Meta and Mary as well as a brother William, all of whom lived over the Main Street business and went to school locally. According to Laura's version of growing up in the town, she recalls that the congregations were so large attending the Society Street services that her father had difficulty in purchasing a pew at the Church.

The Minister in charge was the popular Rev. George Woodside, who became a very close family friend. The congregation was largely drawn from the families of land agents, heads of cattle ranches, stewards, household controllers and other senior management staff employed in the various large houses in the area; these men were almost invariably of Scottish origin and Presbyterians.

Mr and Mrs. Woodside had two children, one of whom, George, was delicate and lame. His medical care was costly and his father, Dr. Woodside, borrowed some money from church funds, knowing full well it would be repaid when he received his stipend. Unfortunately, some unkind and narrow-minded persons found out about the loan and reported it to the Church Commissioners, which forced Rev. Woodside to resign, despite the strongest protests from the Ballinasloe congregation.

In 1907, Rev. William Elliott came from Naas and opened a private school, in the old National School premises in Mount Pleasant. He later persuaded the church elders to build a hall, which was



named after and dedicated to the memory of Dr. James Whigham, who had been minister in Ballinasloe for about thirty years and had subsequently gone on to be Moderator of the General Assembly.

The hall, at the rear of the Church, was finished in 1908 and proved to be of great benefit, not only to the Presbyterians but to the whole community. At the same time a cottage, for the caretaker, was built behind the hall.

During World War 1, Rev. Elliott opened a canteen in the Whigham Hall. It was open every evening of the week to men of all religious persuasions. Nobody asked any questions—they were all made equally welcome. Catholic and Protestant women alike baked for the canteen and they formed a rota to serve in the evenings. The men could get a cup of tea or coffee, or a glass of homemade wine for 1d and a large piece of ginger cake, shortbread, oatcake, apple tart or something similar for 2d. Darts, chess, cards and all kinds of board games were available. It was all very simple entertainment as there were no clubs in the

town at that time.

Later the Whigham Hall was used by the local Table Tennis Club while the local Musical Society rehearsed for many of the productions there. It was also used for numerous other groups and events.

Laura Wood's book "Laura's a Caution" is a fascinating insight into her years growing up in Ballinasloe, as well as many of the characters that lived in that era who she knew.

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ARCHDEACON CHARLES TRENCH

It was more years ago than I care to reckon, many moons before free secondary education had become a twinkle in the eye of a government minister. Pat Carney, Headmaster of St. Grellan's National School, had persuaded my parents to enter me – despite a lacklustre academic record – for a scholarship to Garbally College.

A prescribed text for the exam was "Séadna", an Irish-language version of the Faust legend by An tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire. One day Mr. Carney announced in class that his colleague, Mattie Ganly, had arranged to provide private tuition in this early 20th-century classic at his home on Dunlo Hill for the fee of a half-crown a lesson per pupil. And so it was that the present writer and several other plodders, with the admixture of a couple of "geniuses", soon found ourselves gathered together in Mattie's front room. The session concluded, we would adjourn for fun and games to a nearby plantation of evergreens overlooking the road and partly surrounding an imposing monument someone had told us marked the grave of Lord Clancarty's dog.

Had we bothered to read the inscription on the cenotaph we might have realized that no dog or man lay buried there. It runs as follows: "This monument was erected by subscribers of all classes and religious distinctions in grateful remembrance of the active benevolence, unwearied kindness, unaffected piety, and the many other virtues manifested by the Hon. and Ven. Charles Le Poer Trench D.D., Archdeacon of Ardagh, who lived for many years amongst them, spending and being spent for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men, and died on the 31st day of October A.D. 1839, aged 66 years."

Born in 1772, Charles Trench was a son of the First Earl of Clancarty. D'Arcy Sirr, the biographer of his brother Power, Archbishop of Tuam, paints an idyllic picture of the future Archdeacon's youth in Garbally where, he tells us, he was much given to running through the fields in all weathers to enjoy an early-morning swim in the lake. A great favourite with the estate servants, he was taught by them to speak Irish fluently. Having served as a lieutenant in the Galway Militia between 1797 and 1799, he pursued divinity studies at Trinity College and applied to his brother for ordination in 1802. This was refused on the grounds of unsuitability, possibly because of Charles's reputation



The La Poer Trench Monument, Dunlo Hill

as a ladies' man. Eventually, though, he was ordained the following year by a bishop in Meath and was given the rectory of Ballinasloe. Power Trench seemingly overcame his earlier reservations about his brother and appointed him to various lucrative ecclesiastical offices, including the Archdeaconry of Ardagh. Charles, however, refused to leave Ballinasloe to perform the duties attached to these offices, allowing them instead to be attended to by curates. In short, he was a pluralist. On the credit side, as a magistrate and agent of his brother the Earl, he proved to be a benevolent despot in imposing good order and cleanliness on the town.

About 1810, at a time when there were no free schools under Catholic management in Ballinasloe, Lord Clancarty set up estate schools on his property to which his tenants and employees were obliged, under threat of eviction or dismissal, to send their children. It is commonly assumed that one of the objects of these schools was to secure converts for the Established Church. However, there seems to be a lack of hard evidence to support this view. Indeed, if such was the case the estate schools were a singularly unsuccessful experiment since there were very few conversions of a permanent nature to the Church of Ireland in Ballinasloe during the course of the 19th century. Whatever the truth of the matter, the Roman Catholic clergy were antagonistic to the schools almost from the start and resorted to excommunicating people who had complied with their landlord's wishes under duress. By this ill-advised policy they played into the hands of their opponents who proceeded to portray them as anti-educational obscurantists prepared to go to any extreme to prevent the children of their parishioners from enjoying the benefits of free schooling. Fr. Garret Lorcan's action in publicly burning copies of the New Testament that had been distributed to pupils can only have served to exacerbate the situation.

Controversy continued to rage on the subject of the estate schools, coming to a head at a series of meetings held in early October 1826 under the auspices of the London Hibernian Society, an Anglican proselytising organisation. The venue was an upper room of the Market House at the top of the Square, at present the location of the man-and-horse monument. A filibuster conducted by Eneas MacDonnell, a Westport-born barrister and one of the champions of Catholic Emancipation, was interrupted when the Archdeacon suddenly appeared leading a squad of policemen who, at a signal from Trench, set about administering a beating to the Catholics present. Later a meeting of Catholics was called to condemn the attack on their



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co-religionists, in the course of which MacDonnell cast aspersions on the moral character of Archdeacon Trench. On foot of his statement, MacDonnell was summoned before the Court of King's Bench in May 1827 charged with criminal libel. His defence counsel, Richard Lalor Sheil, brought forward witnesses to testify that on one occasion when the Archdeacon was adjutant of the Galway Militia he had a soldier's wife stripped to the waist and flogged in the presence of the regiment drawn up in the barracks square. She had been accused of stealing a pair of brass candlesticks. In 1810, another witness claimed, Trench, in his capacity as a local magistrate, had sentenced two men convicted of stealing wool to be whipped from one end of the town to the other. When Trench observed the official executioner to be applying the lash with insufficient vigour he attempted to intervene to administer the punishment himself. Sheil then went on to entertain the court with a recitation of the names of the children, thirteen in number, allegedly fathered out of wedlock by his reverence in the town and neighbourhood of Ballinasloe since his reception of Holy Orders. In spite of Sheil's presentation of evidence, MacDonnell was found guilty and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment in Kilmainham Jail. Prior to the schools dispute, Archdeacon Trench's relations with the local Catholic clergy seem to have been cordial. According to D'Arcy Sirr, after Trench assumed his ministry in Ballinasloe, the Catholic parish priest, Garret Lorcan, became a personal friend, and Trench apparently wrote in his favour to a cardinal acquaintance in the Vatican when Lorcan's name was put forward by the clergy for the bishopric of Clonfert. D'Arcy Sirr further states that "the Roman Catholic Bishop Costello was constantly in the habit of dining three times a week with Dr. Trench at Mackney; and so high was the esteem in which both he and his curate John Galbraith were held at that period, that once, when the disturbances of the Whiteboys were endangering the country, the priest of Taughmaconnell invited both to attend his chapel after service and address his congregation on the guilt and error of their conduct. Two chairs were provided for them near the altar, and upon their arrival after Mass they were escorted through the dense crowd with great respect and solemnity." Very likely if the parish priest of Taughmaconnell wanted a clergyman of the Established Church to endorse his condemnation of a secret agrarian society his choice would naturally have fallen on Charles Trench who could preach in Irish, which in those pre-Famine times was the vernacular of Ballinasloe's rural hinterland. At this remove a fair assessment of Archdeacon Trench's character is a virtual impossibility. It has been suggested that much of what was written about him was the work of his enemies, and must therefore

be approached with caution. Alongside stories of his cruelty are others telling of his solicitude for the poor and afflicted. His supposed notoriety as a sadist and a womanizer failed to deter Bishop Costello from regularly availing himself of the hospitality of his home and table. We would probably not be too far off the mark in describing Charles Trench as a complex individual full of contradictions, a mixture of good and bad like the rest of humanity. And oh yes, in case you haven't already guessed, Mattie's tutoring notwithstanding, I never won that scholarship!

BRIAN LYNCH

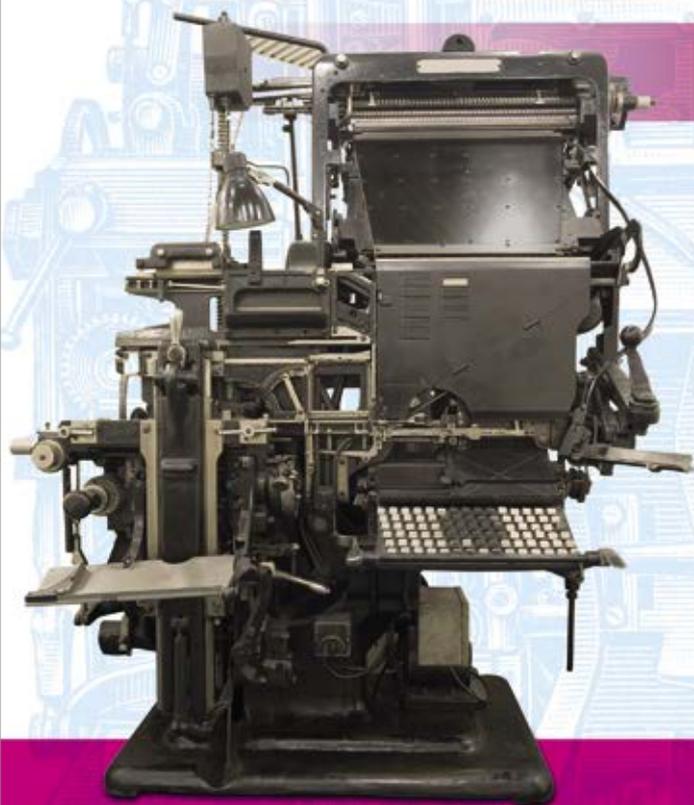
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SEAMUS (SEAMIE DODD) DONNELLAN

The sports supporters of town and especially in the Social Club were shocked at the passing of a revered friend and companion, Seamie Dodd Donnellan, who died on the 25th of Feb.

Seamie served on the Social Club's committee for numerous years and was a Trojan worker. He was always keen to help with club fundraising and wasn't afraid to put the shoulder to the wheel for the betterment of the club.

Seamie played on numerous club teams and represented the club in the inter club and inter firms competitions and won a fair few single and team titles throughout the years. He loved to attend live events. He was a regular on "Jimmy the Hat's Bus" to Goffs annually where they held the Irish Open snooker championship. He loved the local exhibitions also and would always be in attendance. He played Steve Davis in the Shearwater and played Jimmy White in Gullanes and in the Clonwyn in Portumna, to name a few.

Seamie always loved bumping into club members when he was out and about the likes of Paul Keighery and Joey Walsh where the



topic of conversation would always only be one thing "SNOOKER."

The affable Seamie had a very close connection to the Grenhams on Main Street where they treated him like one of their own and he also worked with Thomas in Gullanes also on Main Street.

He also adored following Galway GAA he would attend games with friends Lizzy O'Connor, Thomas O'Connor, Lar Rielly Snr (RIP), Son Madden, Stephen Coleman and Mike and Ann Hynes. He also loved to meet Mike in Joe's when Man Utd were playing and loved the crack and slugging that went with it. A great Disc Jockey in his day and a great man to throw a party also.

Sincere sympathy and condolences to all the Dodd family, brothers Charles (Chuck) and Michael (Mickey) Murray, relatives, kind neighbours and many good friends. and the Bed of heaven to you Seamie, our dear friend.

BY JOBY KELLY

HARBOUR ROAD'S DERMOT DARCY

Dermot Darcy was born in the Harbour Road on 24th June 1938 to parents Jane Riddell and Thomas Darcy. After a happy and normal youth, Dermot met Patsy Kenny who was to become his wife and mother to their six children, a union that spanned 60 years.

Dermot worked in Burnhouse at the time and things were tough, but good. After happy spells in Jubilee and St Brendan's, they bought their first house in Brackernagh.

Paddy Irwin gave Dermot an opportunity and he went on to become manager and best salesperson in the auto factor business, winning many a prize from Fords... the best being a trip to Bermuda in 1976. Patsy's fear of flying and the Bermuda Triangle went unheard and off they went!!! His job meant travelling Europe a lot and ended every trip bringing home a large stuffed animal for his youngest daughter Amanda!

After the demise of Ford, Patsy and Dermot set out in business for themselves with the Tearaway store for eighteen years. The success of it allowed them to really enjoy themselves, travelling

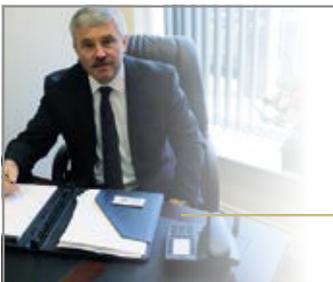
and touring in their down time.

Having sold Brackernagh, they were residents in Ard Mhuire where they retained huge friendships- even after their final move to the countryside of Parkmore.

Having gained confidence in business they opened a pub called Lanigans. Typical of them it opened the Friday of the fair. Many have recounted to dad that they spent half their wages in Tearaway and the other half in Lanigans.

Dermot and Patsy retired roughly twenty years ago, giving them time for their passion for the garden. Hours were spent in that garden ... not all toiling but a little entertaining too. Their Garden often won awards which made him and Patsy quite proud.

Sadly Dermot got sick and passed away on the 11th May 2020, in his own bedroom-looking out at this garden and hearing his birds. To his wife Patsy, children and grandchildren our sympathies are extended.



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BREDA KELLY RIP

The community of Aughrim and surrounding area was saddened to hear of the passing of Breda Kelly, Derrada, on 15th February after a long illness.

Born on 2 July 1938, Breda grew up in Ballinacloy, Co Tipperary. In 1935 she emigrated to Cheltenham where she lived with her older sister, Mary and her husband Paddy. Though under a fairly strict curfew, Breda managed to sneak out the window to go dancing.

After a move to Finchley with the family in 1955, Breda trained in nursing where her love of dancing led her to meet her future husband, Fohenagh native, Sonny Kelly. After dating for three years, they got married in Cricklewood when Breda was twenty. Their two eldest children, Janet & Vivian were born in England. Expecting their third child, Frances, in 1963 they decided to move back to Ireland where Sonny gained employment with Bord na Mona in Kildare. A year later they moved back to Sonny's family in Fohenagh and were blessed with two more children, Kevin and Carmel. Sonny worked at Burnhouse in Ballinasloe as a fitter / mechanic until its closure.

Breda and Sonny purchased land and the family moved to Derrada, Aughrim after building their house, Sonny doing most of the work himself. In later years Breda worked with her sister Mary Mannion at Creagh Nursing Home, where her cheerful disposition endeared her to all the patients, staff, visitors and neighbours alike.

Their happiness was shattered when Breda was diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2010, but after surgery and treatment, made a full recovery. Her beloved Sonny became ill in 2012 and passed away on 27 February 2015.

Breda was heartbroken without Sonny. They went dancing every week and sadly she never danced again. She always kept up the spirits for the family and was a great believer in putting a smile on your face and getting on with things. She loved a good sing-song and going to musicals.

Unfortunately illness was to strike again when Breda was diagnosed with cancer for the second time in the summer of 2018. After fighting a brave battle she went to her eternal reward on 15 February this year. A highly regarded member of Aughrim Church Choir, some choir members, (socially distanced & observing strict Covid guidelines), sang outside the church, one of her favourites, Lord of the Dance, as her remains were removed.

Breda is survived by her children Janet, Vivian (McGuire), Frances (Cooke), Kevin and Carmel, 13 Grandchildren and one great granddaughter Emily, sisters Lily & Pearl, extended family and friends.

BY EVELYN DONNELLAN



MAY COOKE-FORMER CREAGH RESIDENT

The Creagh area of Ballinasloe and wider environs was saddened to hear of the passing of May Cooke (nee Hynes) formerly of Church Street, Creagh on February 28th. Born 14 October 1926, the second eldest of five children of parents Paddy & Julia (nee McGann) Hynes. They lived on Church Street among neighbours Keigherys, Meyers, Kellys, Gordons and Higgins to name but a few. May spent her younger adult life in Dublin working in the fashion industry where she was well known and respected. A model for the famous Slowey's Fashion House in the capital, the photos of her time in that area are testament to the elegant lady she was, a trait carried through her life to the end.

Having met the love of her life, John Cooke, May and her sister Dympna who married Frank McGuire had a double wedding in the late 1950s. Sadly shortly after their marriage John was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in the mid-sixties when their son, David, was barely four years old.

May and David returned to the bosom of her family in Creagh. As Manageress in Woods Drapery she gave sound advice and help in choosing the most suitable outfits for all occasions and also ran her own boutique at one time. Her endearing manner made her many friends for life with whom she kept in touch up until the end. Though offers of relationships came her way, she always said no one would ever love her like John, so no man stood a chance of filling those "big shoes"!

May later moved to Castlereah to be near her son David and his family, making new friends, but never losing touch with the old ones. A great listener, her words of wisdom and encouragement comforted many people through tough times.

Devoted to David, his wife Frances and their children, she never missed a stage performance by any of the family. May loved musicals and sing songs, her own party piece being "Smiling Through." The past few weeks have been very difficult for the family as Frances lost her dear mum, Breda Kelly, just twelve days before May passed.

May spent the last few days of her life in Portiuncula Hospital, where her unexpected death came as a shock to all who knew her. Her funeral Mass was celebrated by Very Rev. Fr John McManus PP in St Patrick's Church, Castlereah where her granddaughter Michelle and fiancée John played some of May's favourite pieces including Chopin's Fantaisie-Impromptu. Her interment took place at St Joseph's Cemetery, Castlereah.

Predeceased by her brothers Jackie & Padraic and sister Dympna, she is survived by her loving son David daughter-in-law Frances, grandchildren, Niall and his wife Sinead, Simon, Michelle and her fiancée John, sister Anna Cooney, sister-in-law Pearl (Stanley) Hynes and her brother-in-law Frank McGuire, nieces, nephews, relatives and many friends. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.

BY EVELYN DONNELLAN



BRAVE HORSEWOMAN AND FARMER

Tributes have poured in from throughout the racing world following the death of Deirdre Bourns (nee Gallery), Lisbeg, Eyrecourt. Wife of Richard, and mother of Andrew and Christopher, Deirdre was admired for her courage and willingness to share her vast knowledge with others despite her physical handicap.

Just the day before her passing, her son Andrew, won the \$50,000 Griffis Grand Prix at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Florida with Darquito, a 10-year-old

Hanoverian gelding, which was bought by his parents as a seven-year-old.

Deirdre always epitomised bravery, courage and fortitude and her knowledge of livestock and bloodstock made her an incredible horsewoman and farmer. She was an extremely popular lady in the community and she will be sadly missed by her family as well as her daughter-in-law Sarah, granddaughter Karen, sisters Bridie and Patsy and her extended family. Through her family and life's work she leaves an incredible legacy which lives on.



LIAM KELLY 1967-2021

Early February brought sad news with the death in Helsinki, Finland, of Liam Kelly.

The eldest son of Mary and the late Liam Kelly of Church Street, Creagh, there was an added poignancy in the fact that the last time Liam had been home to Ireland was for his father's funeral in January 2020. Aged only 53, Liam had battled cancer for more than 7 years and his death led to a huge outpouring of sympathy for his wife, son and family from the numerous friends he had made in the hospitality industry in Helsinki since he moved there in 1987.

Known in his adopted home as 'Billy', Liam, who was a popular barman in different premises over the years, had such a positive impact on people's lives that the 'Helsingin Sanomat', the largest subscription newspaper in Finland, ran a major feature days later with the headline "Helsinki's Nightlife Legend of the 1990s Billy Kelly is Dead". The article paid tribute to his warm and personable nature, his unflinching sense of good humour and his dedication to his wife Teija and son Luke.

There were also literally hundreds of tributes paid by former



customers on social media and on the Facebook page of Helsinki's Malaga Bar, patrons described Liam as "so unforgettable", "so special and so amazing", "always friendly, a good guy", "warm, thoughtful and funny" and "legendary".

Liam never forgot his home in Ballinasloe and looked forward to his annual visits, timing them to help his father Liam draw home turf. He was also in almost daily contact by phone with his mother Mary, his brothers Oliver, Michael, Declan, Alan and his sister Emer. He faced his illness with the most tremendous courage and never lost his irrepressible sense of humour. He died peacefully on 9th February with his wife, son and his brothers Michael and Alan by his side.

His obituary in the 'Helsingin Sanomat' noted that "He will be missed in Helsinki", but his loss is all the more keenly felt by his wife, son, mother and siblings and indeed all who were privileged to know him and have him as a friend. May he rest in peace.

BY COLM CROFFY

FORMER COUNCIL SUPERVISOR

Noel Casey, who passed away at his home in Perssepark, Aghrim after a long illness, had worked for over 37 years on the outdoor staff of Ballinasloe Urban Council and Galway Co. Council before retiring as General Services Supervisor.

His area covered Ballinasloe town as well as Banagher, Eyrecourt, Lawrencetown, Kiltormer and Aghrim, as Road Overseer and was in charge of fourteen operatives. He was a very popular official both with his colleagues and his superiors. During his career he was on call at all hours to deal with emergency flooding, accidents, storm damage and fires.

After leaving school, Noel served his apprenticeship as a trainee



carpenter in Coleran Bros, Main St. before moving on to Michael Kenny's workshop and later joining the maintenance staff of Hayden's Hotel in 1978. Three years later he moved to Ballinasloe Urban Council as part of the maintenance staff, where he worked for sixteen years. In 1997 he was appointed General Services Supervisor with Galway Co. Council—a position he held up to his retirement.

Noel Casey is survived by his wife Mercy, sons Cathal and Conor, daughter Ailish, as well as very many more relatives and friends. His funeral took place to Killooney Cemetery and along the route many neighbours, friends and former work colleagues turned out to bid farewell to a very popular Council Supervisor.

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BARRY MCKEON – FRONT LINE GIVER

The community was left reeling in shock with the death at home of Barry McKeon on the 5th of Feb. He was a member of the Boy Scouts, through which he learned many valuable skills and got to travel in Europe on camp trips. He also was a member of the Civil Defence, which allowed him to find his passion for emergency services.

Barry worked in Square D for many years and had the chance to travel and learn. While working in Square D he became a Fireman, which he loved, later becoming fire chief of Ballinasloe Fire Brigade.

When Square D closed down he applied successfully to be a Paramedic He was giving as much of his time as he could to be of service for the community.

Even though he was busy he always made time for his family and his friends, even if it was only ONE pint in town. He was never short of words and could argue a point to a fault at the end of an argument, the phrase “you don’t know S@#T about S@HT” would end it with a laugh.

Barry McKeon was a great father, partner, friend and colleague. He was someone who was always at the other end of a phone to help with even the smallest inconveniences of life. He didn’t always have the answers but he would help you find them.

He had some very hard times but he made it through them all and had so much happiness since his last big hurdle of cancer. He had found his No.1 outside of his kids. He had wanted to go on many more adventures with his family and friends once he retired but life is short and things shouldn’t be put off. He will be hugely missed.

Barry’s funeral cortege received a blue-light escort from St. Michael’s Church to Shannon Crematorium by members of the Fire Service, National Ambulance Service and Civil Defence - all organisation he served in with a manner of dedication and professionalism that warranted such a fitting tribute.

To his partner Orla, children Aoife and Ros, sister Moya, family, friends and esteemed colleagues from the Ambulance Service(NAS), Fire Service and Civil Defence, we offer our deepest sympathies.



RECENT DEATHS: January, February & March 2021

Parish of Kilclooney & Creagh (Ballinasloe)

Due to recent lockdown restrictions readers have requested that names of the local deceased be published since our last edition. Our condolences and sympathies to all the bereaved.

Patrick (Pakie) Murray,
Beagh, Creagh. 2nd January.

Ann Dolphin,
Loughill, Creagh. 15th January.

Christine Harrison,
Millrace Nursing Home. 17th January.

Paddy Brennan,
Creggane, Ballinasloe. 24th January

Anne Delaney,
Brackernagh. 24th January.

Amelia Faulkner,
Kilgarve Court, Creagh. 31st January.

Barry McKeon,
Moher, Ballinasloe. 5th February.

Nora Gallagher,
St. Michael’s Place. 19th February.

Eamon Cregg,
(formerly Perssepark) Cork 21st February

Seamus (Seamie) Dodd,
St. Michael’s Place. 25th February.

Noel Casey,
Perssepark. 4th March.

Dorothy McGrath,
Limerick & Ballinasloe. 18th March.

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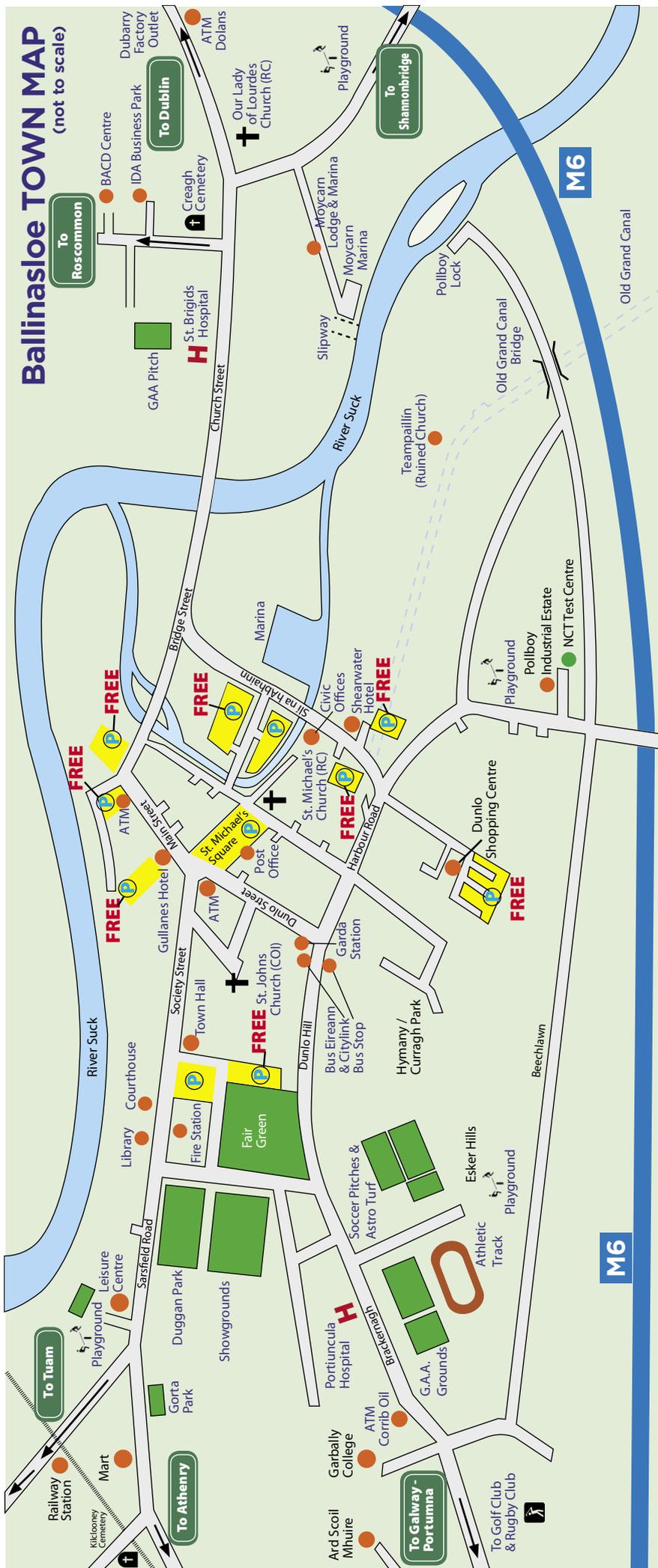
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Ballinasloe TOWN MAP

(not to scale)



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Ballinasloe History Walk

- 1 - Start at the statue known as *The Man with the Horse*, where Main Street joins St. Michael's Square. From the crossing near the statue, continue by turning right onto Main Street. The prosperity of Ballinasloe in Georgian times can be seen in the scale and classical style of the buildings here. A fine group of four frontages stand across from the statue of The Man with the Horse. With shops and pubs on the ground floor for the most part, these Main Street premises have several floors above.
 - 2 - Walking along Main Street, lift your eyes above the shop frontages for one of the town's characteristic sights. There are the Diocletian windows that grace several facades. They are from the years after 1805 when the 2nd Earl was in charge. A window of this sort is formed under a semi-circular arch with two upright divisions so that the whole opening is divided into three parts.
 - 3 - As you stand at the meeting point of Bridge Street and Main Street, you will see the Victorian frontage of a commercial premises, originally the Masonic Hall. Next to it stands a classical looking, beautifully-crafted, early 19th century stone house, currently a guest house. Beside these is a tall, fine stone-fronted classical mansion, which is now the Bank of Ireland. It was originally the town mansion of the Lord of all of Ballinasloe, the Earl of Clancarty. A friend of king George IV, the Earl was one of the architects of the resistance to the emperor Napoleon. It could be said that he was the person to whom most credit is due for the layout, growth and architectural character of Ballinasloe as we see it today.
 - 4 - At the end of Main Street, head along Bridge Street, then turn to the right to the pathway which runs to the riverscape where you can see channels flowing through the several arches of the long stone bridge over the river Suck, one of the town's most precious monuments. The Bridge has been in continuous use since the 16th century and its extension in 1754 prepared it structurally to carry even the heaviest juggernauts of today.
 - 5 - Walk through to the far end of the park; you will approach St Michael's Church (1852-58) that stands in a commanding position over the Square. Its architect was J.J. McCarthy, a follower of Augustus Pugin (famed for other Neo-Gothic churches in Ireland) - and the design is said to have been revised by Pugin himself. Inside are many fine stained glass windows. Of particular quality are those of St. Patrick and St. Rose of Lima, of 1925, by the renowned Dublin Stained glass artist, Harry Clarke and The Raising of the daughter of Jairus by Patrick Pollen, inserted in 1958.
 - 6 - From St. Michael's Church now walk up St. Michael's Square back towards the Man with the Horse Statue. Take a left into Dunlo Street, an important street in the history of the town, which contains, together with other buildings of about the same date, the late-Georgian Garda Station. The Station is towards the far end of the street, on the right hand side. Also on this street, over Dolan's Electrical Shop, you can see another fine example of Diocletian windows.
 - 7 - Halfway up Dunlo Street, turn right up Duggan Street, which will take you to St. John's Church (Church of Ireland, 1843). It dominates the vast Fair Green which becomes a hive of activity during one week every year when up to 100,000 people throng to the October fair. Look out over the Fair Green and admire one of the grandest freestanding classical monuments in the region. Dedicated to Charles Le Poer Trench, it was designed in the Neo-Greek style by the English architect George Papworth (1781-1855). A mile past this monument on the Main Galway road, South West of the town, the Earl of Clancarty's former country house is situated, where imposing gates mark the entrance to Garbally Court. It has been a school since 1923.
- Walk down Church Hill onto Society Street and turn left, arriving at the Courthouse on the right. Society Street, like Main Street, was the 19th century location for the professional classes. As well as The Courthouse, it contains the former Bridewell (or gaol) from the 1840s. Further along this street, Ballinasloe Railway Station is a must. Constructed in 1851, it is a Neo-Gothic limestone tour-de-force and a fine example of the quality of rural Irish railway architecture in the mid-19th century.

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