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BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 11 Issue 6: Feb '22 - March '22



**RITA KELLY - WRITER OF
DISTINCTION**

**PEARSE'S CAPTAINS - HISTORIC
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Welcome to Volume 11 issue 6

Welcome to the 11th consecutive edition with no events guide as we move into a different phase of COVID living.

The weariness and brittleness of all has been very evident recently and it's perhaps fitting somewhat that this edition is the last hopefully without a formal guide at this Imbolc or Springtime of year. I don't think any editor for a long time will have reports on an International Senior Ladies' PFA Soccer Player of the Year-Heather, Guinness Rugby Writers Women's Player of the year-Beibhinn, two professional Connacht Squad players-Oisín and Shane and historic Connacht Senior Football Club Victors captained by Emmett and David in Padraig Pearses. Not wishing to take from the heroics of the individual athletes or mentors but our community has truly earned back its accolade of being a key sporting town when you see such success.

Everyone, on the field and off, is to be applauded for these huge achievements. There is a link between an engaged, committed, co-operative and hard-working community and their sporting successes in terms of medals and indeed facilities. Since the investments of the early noughties in sports grounds and underage activity we have been reaping huge rewards and we all salute that success. Long may you continue to engage and inspire us and thanks for being so generous with time for the next generation, who hope to emulate you.

Five new sites are busy this January – three heralding new housing developments totalling some 200 new units, the hospital new build and the temporary class rooms for St. Teresa's School under my window as I type!

From many of the reports in LIFE there is a wealth of progress to hand, and no end to the commitment and enthusiasm of organisations and volunteers to drive on and develop this town and its community. However, there is more than just a passive disconnect in the words of

Last month we held our Annual General Meeting with Limited numbers in attendance due to Covid restrictions but a report on same is included in this month's magazine.

Despite the many impediments in our way we have kept the foot to the floor in all projects.

During the year we had visits from all three main party leaders and they all agree Ballinasloe is at a crossroads and heading the right direction. JCBs and Hymacs are out on several locations in the Town with a lot of activity planned across both Public and Private sites in 2022.

You will see in this month's magazine that many organisations have job opportunities available and this will have a positive knock on effect for the whole economy.

We are engaging with the IDA and Enterprise Ireland on a regular basis and are very hopeful of some very positive news from these Organisations in the very near future.

We will start work later in the year on the creation of more office space in the newly acquired Building on Society Street which will have the

State; its agencies and actions.

The dignified commemoration of the regime transfer from one insider class to another, in Dublin Castle has masked the discomfort of many by the privilege of the few. In 1922 the generous meritocracy envisaged by the Poets, Muinteoiri and Messenger Boys of the GPO was quickly consigned to history books, as the professional elites set about reordering their feathered lives. A state administration for a colony was not even re tooled for a new Free State – the red letter boxes were painted green!

And so the hypocrisy of state officials visiting the Parochial Hall last week and informing a voluntary group how it cannot vandalise (with a budget of €165,000) the precious limestone used in the 1860 build whilst allowing two agencies of the State (budgets €25 billion) wantonly vandalise by indifference one of the most significant architectural and heritage sites St. Brigid's Hospital should not be a surprise.

If this Pandemic has taught us anything it is that we have an inflexible, bureaucratic, and indolent state sector not fully fit for 21 century challenges; alongside a community and voluntary cohort of citizens who can and will move mountains – not just for medals but for enterprise, social justice and quality of life issues.

Time for a bit of serious rebalancing. Enjoy the read!

Le Gach De Ghui,
COLM CROFFY,
Editor.



capacity to house 35/40 people.

The way we all operate, both personally and business wise, has changed in the last two years and in many instances we will not revert to old habits and this in itself will create new opportunity for the Community as a whole and it is with this in mind I feel we can look forward to 2022 with renewed hope for a brighter future.

The Local Area Plan for the next five years is currently being finalised. It is ambitious on paper so for it to deliver the growth projected, it will need an invigorated approach from Galway County Council and the various other agencies as Voluntary organisations like ourselves can only go so far but we are here to work with them in every possible way.

As a local community organisation we are looking forward to much progress for the catchment area of Ballinasloe in 2022.

SEAMUS DUFFY,
Chairman Ballinasloe Area Community Development Limited.



Articles and Photos Welcome

NEXT ISSUE
Deadline March 8th

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The local Area Development Plan for Ballinasloe, front-loads development up to 2040 into the next six years, according to the planning regulator. Key to the four recommendations and 8 observations is the need to copper-fasten 30% of the new residential developments for the town centre current footprint – to deter further ribbon or once off housing.

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) said the draft local area plan for 2022 to 2028 could “benefit” from further work to ensure “compact growth” of the town, urban regeneration and sustainable transport improvements. The OPR’s responsibility is to review local authority development plans to ensure they are aligned with regional and national development strategies.

The submission from the regulator’s office opined that the draft plan showed “considerable and evident work” particularly in the preparation of a local transport plan and the hosting of online webinars to improve public consultation.

The OPR presented a total of four “recommendations” for changes that need to be considered to align the draft plan with regional and national plans, as well as eight “observations” which the Council planners must show that they have been taken into account.

Some of these recommendations include auditing lands available for a new school and ensuring the selected site is accessible by walking and cycling. Another was to deliver a minimum of 30% of residential units within the existing built-up footprint of the town. One observation the OPR made is that the plan should include age-friendly policies and “a clear strategy in relation to the provision of nursing homes and sheltered housing”.

While the submission noted the regional policy of allocating a population growth target

of 30% by 2040, the local draft plan seeks to reach this level of growth in the next six years. The OPR did not disregard these targets, but said they were “ambitious and will require significant focus and the allocation of resources needed to achieve this level of growth”.

A meeting of the Municipal District Council is due to be held in early March where all recommendations on the report will be discussed.

Cllr. Dermot Connolly, Cathaoirleach of the MDC, said: “We will be considering the report from the OPR and we will evaluate it over the coming weeks. There are areas of strategic and economic interest in the town that we have in mind for the project and this will be presented in the meeting. If there are alterations to be made to the plan, they will be made fully aware to the public.”

WORK BEGINS ON NEW HOMES



Site works have started on the Dunlo/Beechlawm Site, with 40 units under construction and Church St., Creagh with 38 units. It is nearly over a decade since such substantial new estates were built in our community.

There are now some planning permissions granted for an additional 150 units in Dunlo Hill, these new builds and the Glantane Village and Kilgarve/Portnick lands.

Galway County Council, on the proposal of Cllr. Dermot Connolly, took the remaining avenues of Glantane village in public charge at pre-Christmas meeting.

It is hoped that the works on the new Cinema Multiplex at the Dunlo Shopping Centre lands will begin during the summer months also.

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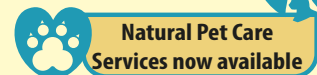
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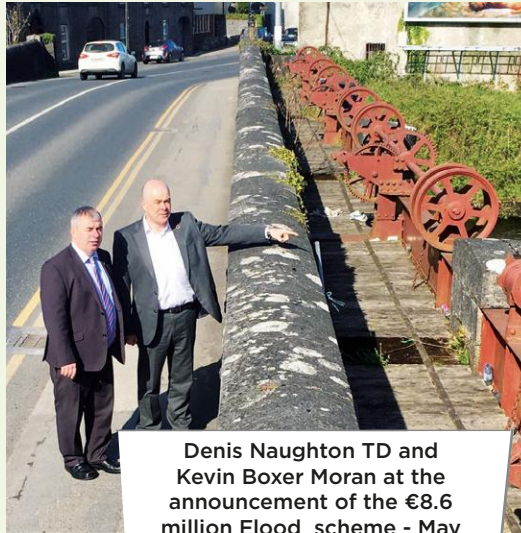
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The Ballinasloe Flood Relief Scheme is lagging way behind according to frustrated public representatives who have been making officials at local and state level aware of their concerns.

After two “once in a lifetime” flooding events in 2009 and 2015, in 2018 €8.6 million project was secured by the then Environment Minister Denis Naughton and Junior Minister Boxer Moran and approved to go to Stage 1, the design stage. However very little progress had been made since. Senator Aisling Dolan stated: “Currently we still are at Stage 1 Scheme Development and Design, there are 5 stages to project completion and we need clear timelines for delivery.”



Denis Naughton TD and Kevin Boxer Moran at the announcement of the €8.6 million Flood scheme - May 2018, nearly four years ago!

At a recent Municipal District meeting before the holidays, it was revealed the project was up to at least 18 months officially behind schedule due to Covid-19. However, Councillor Michael Connolly pointed out that almost a decade ago, a local deputation met with then OPW Minister Simon Harris to outline solutions. Councillor Connolly added: “it boggles the mind the length of time the project is taking,” and questioned if they’ll still be asking the same questions in two year’s time.

Councillor Declan Geraghty also went on the record with his frustration “it seems to be nothing but report after report while the people of the floodplain await this badly needed scheme.” He suggested that: “someone in Government should wake up and take the bull by the horns and get rid of some of the bureaucracy surrounding the project.”

Preparatory work has now eventually commenced on the scheme with Hydraulics reports and several engineering and environmental surveys having been completed including Drainage surveys, Topographic surveys and specialist ecological surveys.

Senator Dolan explained: “The Office of Public Works (OPW) are managing this project in liaison with Galway County Council, with ARUP and Ryan Hanley as engineering and environmental consultants. I have spoken with OPW Minister Patrick O’Donovan’s office on the importance of this project and current dragging timelines.”

“In 2020, I worked with the Council to use the River Suck Drainage District scheme to clear vegetation, silt and litter in the water channel beside St Michael’s and Slí na hAbhainn which took place this Autumn – to combat flooding in this area. It is crucial that any and all interim measures to reduce the chances of flooding are maintained until this project is completed” said Dolan.

The Ground Investigation is currently taking place for the project which will help to understand the ground conditions within the Scheme Area, to inform the development, appraisal, and costing of the Scheme options. This information will then be utilised to decide on the detailed design of the scheme to compile an assessment of Scheme Options.

Senator Dolan added: “The public consultation on the next stage of emerging routes will take place in February 2022 and I look forward to an active on the ground engagement by the project team with residents and the community.”

Stage 1, which is in progress should conclude in 2023. According to an estimated timeline for the scheme, the following four stages should take place over the next five years (subject to approval and funding) with the project due to be finalised by 2027 – a staggering nine years after approval.

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CLLR. PARSONS SECURES KEY CHANGES

By Robbie Gately

A lot of good drafting work on the five-year development plan has been led by Cllr Evelyn Parsons – with near-unanimous support from her Municipal Area colleagues over the past few months of special meetings.

Her motion was carried for Poolboy Landfill to put in place a Remediation Plan and to get specifically named as a county policy objective. The Chief Executive committed to its remediation in full compliance with the High Court Order of 1999 in front of a full Council and press twice during the week in response to her raising the motion. On the back of the motion, she seconded another insertion for Kilconnell Remediation which was put forward by Cllr Broderick.

She referenced her vision for a Heartland Park, in the old landfill, which will be explored in the context of the Local Area Plan rezoning- if the LAP boundary can be extended.

The Councillor also proposed Kellysgrove had the potential to be a public park as it has Blue/Green Infrastructure and connects to Peatlands. This was adopted into the County Development Plan.

She proposed a successful specific policy objective to recognise Portiuncula Hospital's importance within the county as the county's second hospital to support its development. This received full support from all colleagues and was included.

The Councillor's three Motions on Environmental Justice carried and will now be included in two chapters on Environment and Biodiversity.

Critically her motion carried on sludge management regional hub, in short, that

Ballinasloe *will not* be considered a suitable location for a regional sludge centre due to its environmental sensitivities (SPC/ Callows, etc).

Finally, the Townparks inner relief road was inserted as a specifically named project under roads as a motion was carried and will now be in the CDP – which has a higher priority than the Local Area Plan.

The material alterations will still have to go on public display by end of February, and the plan should be adopted by May 2022.



WOMEN'S SAFETY HIGHLIGHTED

In the light of the horrific tragic killing of the young female runner Ashling Murphy, Cllr. Parsons is making representations for the running track in Dunlo to have its hours of operation extended from 7am to 9pm and open Sundays and Bank Holidays in the strongest terms.

Having been approached by girls and women in the community, who no longer feel safe jogging alone on trails before or after work or school as was their practice. The track is an excellent facility, well used, well lit, passively supervised, and with the possibility of CCTV security if the corporate directorate allows for it. She said meaningful measures need to be taken to combat fear regarding Violence Against Women. In the interests of female safety and that of the community as a whole, she is urging the Council to facilitate this extended hour request.

For the first time, Galway County Council turned the county Orange in response to Cllr. Parson's and Soroptimists Ballinasloe request on VAW issues during November. It is

a UN Global 16 days of Activism on VAW each year. Tuam clocktower and county buildings were lit up in orange light, and she hopes to build on this project next year.

She passed a motion last month calling for the third Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender Based Violence Services to be expedited before the end of the year and to have an audit on emergency accommodation. This got responses from Ministers McEntee and O'Gorman and had Senator Keogan.

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One of the largest town centre residential regeneration projects in recent memory, undertaken by Galway Council, is happening between Dooley's Corner and the Mount on Dunlo Hill.

32 new residential units are to be completed on the site with a part 8 planning application due before the full Council at the end of April this year. The project is being fast tracked and funded under the Social Housing Development Fund.

Cathairleach Cllr. Dermot Connolly, supported by his Municipal District Colleagues have been trying to ensure that an important national and international Heritage and Cultural attribute to the site be formally marked.

Eugene Watters, (Eoghan Ó Tuairisc) was born on 3rd April 1919 in the third house from Dooley's Bar. Educated locally at the Boys' School, at the rear of the Town Hall and obtaining a scholarship in Garbally, where he excelled in Irish, Latin and Greek. He qualified as a national teacher and started in a Boys' School in Rathfarnham in September 1939 and the following year he enrolled in the extra-mural BA course at UCD.

While he had been writing since his time in Garbally, it was in the years from 1946 to 1960 that Eugene developed as a prolific author. Articles, pantomime scripts, poems and short stories flowed from his pen, the latter mostly inspired by characters and incidents recalled from his earlier years in Ballinasloe, where he and wife Una would holiday each year, boating and fishing on the River Suck.

Leaving teaching to focus on writing-from 1961 onwards, the emphasis shifted to Irish and in that year his first play in the language, De Réir na Rúibricí (According to the Rubrics) was produced at both the Taibhdhearc in Galway and the Damer in Dublin. Two years later Eugene was appointed editor of Feasta, a literary magazine published by the Gaelic League.

His first wife, Una, died prematurely in 1965 and he came back to Ballinasloe to live with his family at the Canal Basin but continued to write. On 28th December 1972 he married Rita Kelly, a budding creative writer and a daughter of Peter Kelly, Brackernagh, and the couple went directly to take up residence in the South East.

In August 1981 they moved to another house, this time on the main road to Carlow.

Their last move was to "The leap" near Enniscorthy the following June, where Eugene succumbed to a heart attack on 24th August. Two days later he was laid to rest beside his beloved Una in Creagh cemetery.

Other notable publications of his include L'Attaque, Lux Aeterna, Dé Luain, Lá Fhéile Míchil, Infinite Variety, The Road to Brightcity, An Lomnochtán and Fornoicht do Chonac.

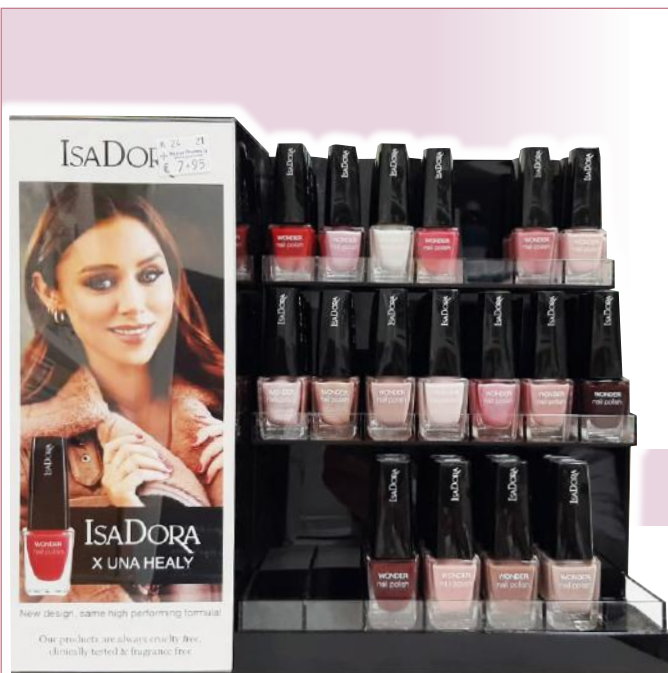
There is huge growing international academic and scholarly interest

in Eugene's work especially amongst Classical and Indigenous writers and translators as Eugene's skills in moving seamlessly between Irish, Greek and Latin have left an indelible legacy in a lot of interpretations which have recently come to light. His penning of Aifreann na Marbh in Lux Aeterna (1964) about the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima remains the clearest and saddest Irish poem about World War II.

Ó Tuairisc's Mass is divided into nine parts: In the mind of its priest or poet, it corresponds to a single day in Dublin, August 6, 1945, the day Hiroshima was destroyed by "Little Boy," the world's first atomic bomb. It is being featured in a BBC documentary for the 60th Anniversary in three years' time.

The poet's earlier Irish writings on his youth and reflections on Ballinasloe are being translated and being published over the coming months.

At their November Council Meeting, Director of Services Mr. Hanrahan, advised that the naming of the Dunlo Hill Housing Development would be decided upon by the Estate Name Committee. Mr. Hanrahan advised that a Badge/Plaque to Commemorate Eoghan O Tuairisc may be possible at the house in question.



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Attendees at the AGM: Back Row: Tomas Gullane, Brian King, James Coyle, Joe Lyons, Brian Conneely, Anita Killeen, Seamus Duffy, Noel Madden. Front Row: Marina Downey, Dan Dowling, Eoghan Kenny, Pearse Keller & John McKenna.

The AGM of the Community Charitable Company - Ballinasloe Area Community Development was held in Gullane's Hotel prior to Christmas.

The Chairman, Company Manager and Auditor delivered very comprehensive reports in summary: Occupancy has remained close to 100% in the Enterprise Centre throughout the pandemic, with 29 enterprises based at the centre full time and another 10 companies using the enterprise centre part time.

The Connected Hubs Funding of €72,000 has been used to deliver energy efficiencies and support more communications facilities to the building.

Contracts for the old Bank Building on Society Street have been signed. Douglas Wallace are the appointed Project Managers and Architects and construction work on the renovation will begin in the middle of the year with new tenants occupying the facility from Autumn of 2023.

The IDA Advance unit site which the company secured and paid for full planning permission on, is still being heavily marketed to clients of IDA and EI and the Directors are hopeful that there will be new investment, as well as the welcome news that Michael Burke's Chanelle haven taken a lease on the old Aptar building and hope to be operating by quarter 3 of this year.

While the Pulse Club has been without face-to-face meetings, several new businesses have been established from the initial grouping and they have plans to kickstart networking when restrictions ease. Grow Remote and Shop Ballinasloe are two initiatives from the PULSE stable that have continued during COVID times.

The Town team, facilitated by Anita Killeen, have been very active with the main focus in recent months on our sustainable energy plan. The Christmas lights project was successful we had a very popular Zombie Walk in the midst of restrictions which created some cashflow for Town Team grant draw down on various projects.

Ballinasloe LIFE continued another year with full publication of all 6 editions, in a decade of growth from 18,000 delivered copies in 2011 to a staggering 42,000 in the year under review. Subscribers and Advertisers, the life blood of the free Mag, have grown from 35 to 73 and have remained very loyal. The project has tipped from loss making to break even with costs in the region of €55,000 pa.

The Social Media aspect to LIFE has seen almost 1,000 more followers on fbook - just under 8,000 with significant growth in Twitter and Instagram - the newer, younger platforms. Over 100 videos were produced with nearly a quarter of a million unique views. The total reach (people connected at least once from any of the LIFE Social Media content) was in excess of 36,000. The Ballinasloe.ie Website which underpins our Marketing effort online saw another year of sustained audience growth and usage.

The 10 year plan has evolved to 2032 and beyond with

3 key pillars confirmed as the way forward. Feedback through presentations to various groups has been sought and is broadly positive. Details of the draft plan have been made available to the three main party leaders who have all visited the Centre in the last few months, something that has never happened before. The draft plan was the catalyst to get public representatives from Galway & Roscommon in a room together and agreement on regular meetings to make progress on joint actions.

The Board and Management of the Company believe the best way forward with the plan (which they have fed into the current County Development Plan and the Local Area Plan for the town) is to secure an Interagency taskforce to Macro manage the delivery with a local plan co-ordinator supporting the section working groups and keeping lines of communication open.

The walks and trails team have been very active with progress made in mapping out walks and trails with new signage and now with the Greenway having a direct link into the Town.

In all of the submissions and plans approved by the Board the need to see action on our water amenities in conjunction with the opening up of the rear of Main Street and Society Street has been prioritised.

The Town enhancement scheme pushed and promoted for by the Company and funded by Galway County Council completed and that has been done with the Town

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looking very attractive, even in the middle of the current situation James Coyle Company Auditor gave a detailed overview and report of the annual returns made. Finances have remained solid with good reserves accumulated since the loan was cleared on the St. Enda's Building several years ago. The company returned revenues of €348,023 and a total certified expenditure of €304,743. The Audited Accounts were proposed for adoption by Joe Lyons and seconded by Marina Downey.

Presenting his report Chairman Seamus Duffy stated "A huge amount of government funding has been earmarked to be spent in the town over the next 4/5 years and while I have made several calls for a coordinated approach, it is falling on deaf ears and we are going to have to take up the mantel. AGMs tend to be a time for looking back but we need to look forward to and there are many priorities out there which we need to take step by step. I believe that as a board we need to agree on what our priorities are in the new year as with so much going on we need to continue to apportion responsibility to the different pillar groups of the plan and drive on."

As the Board meet and present the new plan to groups and organisations over the coming weeks - they will be looking for

volunteers to help out with their skills and time to achieve further progress.

In concluding he expressed thanks to the Company Manager Lyn, the Board of Directors, and the many people who have helped out in the various projects detailed in the reports and the funding agencies who the Company continue to partner with.

List of current board members:

Sean Kelly (Credit Union), Dan Dowling (Creagh Com Dev Council), Micheal Connolly (Galway County Council), Seamus Duffy (Membership), Valerie Dolan (Membership), Eoghan Kenny (Membership), Joe Lyons (Membership), Kevin Broderick (Membership), Pearse Keller (Membership), Marina Downey (Membership), Noel Madden (Co-opted), John McKenna (Co-opted), Brian King (Co-opted), Anita Killeen(Co-opted).



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BUSINESS AS USUAL... just done differently!

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

PULSE CLUB TO REGROUP



The Pulse Club was established to support entrepreneurs and developing businesses in the locale, through organised events including peer to peer mentoring, training workshops, along with small large-scale networking events.

Since the inception of the Pulse Club in 2019, the club has supported over 20 new businesses to go from idea to launch. So, whether a budding entrepreneur with a seed of an idea, those in a start-up, those in business for a while or those who have many years of experience and going at it again they can assist you.

The Pulse Club based in the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre has been quiet over the past few months due to the impact of Covid 19 and the uncertainty of organising networking events, with activities limited to supporting individual members via Zoom on an as-requested basis. However, with signs of optimism in the air and demand from businesses on the ground the steering committee is planning activities and events to be run in the early parts of this year.

When restrictions ease the club hope to host a suitable networking event to allow the entrepreneurs and businesses in the area to reconnect. All details about upcoming events will be circulated through the Facebook page at The Pulse Club Ballinasloe and via email. If you are interested in receiving information on upcoming events you can sign up to the club's newsletter by registering at <https://www.thepulseclub.com/sign-up.html>



PULSE CLUB Members at their last Networking event - Feb 2020.

BUSINESS

There is a new clothing alteration service set up in Ballinasloe in the form of the 'House of Alterations'. Proprietor Oksana Neviadomskaja who is a native of Lithuania, is bringing her area of expertise to the town in a new bespoke premises in Croffy's Yard, Main St.

Oksana who moved to Ireland 13 years ago has a wealth of experience in the industry, as a gifted seamstress. She has been in the clothing and garment alteration trade for over 25 years. Having previously operated in Athlone and Tullamore she has decided to move here as part of her new business venture.

Having noticed a niche for a service of this type in the town, Oksana thought it was the perfect place to set up in: "A few of my friends had told me that there was no clothing alteration service in Ballinasloe, so it seemed a great option for me. It is a very busy town and a service like mine can be very useful for the locals."

She too accepts the Pandemic Shopping patterns have forced a lot more clothes purchasers on line but very often the mid quality garment requires fixings or minor alterations and to send it back to its origin or shipping warehouse can be costly or take up to three weeks. "It's really difficult try and fix a zip or extend a hem on a special occasion dress if the material used in manufacture can't take a stitch" she explains.

"I provide a unisex, same day alteration service that can mend a wide variety of items. These include shortening/altering jeans, trousers, skirts or replacing zippers on them. I work on bridal, communion, and confirmation dresses, which I can shorten/alter or restyle all types of garments. From men's and women's jackets/coats I can alter their length and the sleeves" she states.

For those worried about exact lengths cuts and finishes - she has a fitting room on the premises. She also repairs and makes interior soft fittings, like curtains, cushion covers, throws and other fabric items including shortening, hemming, taping, or joining them.

Her fees are modest for the time and skills - all prices are negotiated at the start of job but the inflation on wordly goods and shipping costs has seen component costs of fastners, buttons, clasps and zips - rocket in the last few months - a plain small zip can cost about €4 to €6 to buy before installing.

Oksana expressed her excitement at starting her business here and she encourages other aspiring businesses to set up locally. "Ballinasloe is an ideal



location to own a business. It is a very busy, vibrant, lively town with quite a large population. It is an ideal location between Athlone and Galway. The people are very friendly and it is an all-round very nice town. I would certainly encourage a business owner to set up here" states Oksana.

The shop officially opens on February 10, but Oksana is using these weeks as a testing period to see what the market is like. House of Alterations is situated in Unit 2, Croffy's Yard and opening hours are 10am-6pm, Tuesday-Saturday. Contact Oksana on (083) 012 5463 for more information.



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Surmodics Inc. a Minnesota-based multinational, is a leading provider of medical device and in vitro diagnostic technologies to the health care industry. Surmodics has made significant investments in its Ballinasloe facility. The site now has full vertical integration including, precision extrusion, balloon forming, catheter assembly, braiding, hydrophilic coating and drug delivery capability.

In recent news, Surmodics is pleased to announce the acquisition of Vetex Medical Limited, located in Galway. This acquisition demonstrates our commitment to the expansion of our thrombectomy platform.

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www.surmodics.com/careers/

A Ballinasloe town native, Karyn Gavin is the new Community Development Officer with Galway Rural Development (GRD), responsible for ensuring the delivery of GRD’s Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) tackling poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and building partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

Her work involves supporting community groups by delivering training programmes, governance supports, grants and helping with funding applications. She also identifies skillsets and conduct needs analyses within a community to help them decide what they need to do it and how.

“My main approach is to consult with members of the community and to try organise tailored supports to community groups who have not put structures in place such as electing a committee. Our online training programme has been successful but we are aware that this doesn’t work for everyone, We do facilitate a loan equipment programme to lend out laptops, projectors, go-pros and so on to registered groups and this has been greatly received with gratitude, especially for people working or studying from home. I also collect and share information weekly around online training & supports, and connect with other agencies working in the area to make sure we are giving the help that is needed in the area”, states Karyn.

“The usual way of meeting in local venues had to change due to COVID 19 to speaking on Zoom, which really hinders the development of a sense of community. Although there has been a real focus on trying to bring meetings into the digital age, through our training courses and our linkage with the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB). So my focus this year will be on trying to help groups to come back together and rebuild themselves” explains Karyn.

Currently focused on registering existing community groups and also, importantly, registering new groups

that might be developing. “I hope to identify local needs and plan to carry out a series of community events this year, which will be guided by what are the needs in the area and what supports might be of help based on advice from members of groups”, notes Karyn.

Thus far her project has supported Care and Repair, Social Services, Youth Projects and Men’s Sheds through SICAP Community grants. A Befriending Project which was rolled out through Ballinasloe Social Services with the help of lovely support from Ballinasloe Meals and Wheels who both coordinated and delivered packs to older and vulnerable members of our community has also been resourced.

“I also am looking forward to working on projects with Ballinasloe Women’s Group, which had to postpone events because of COVID-19. Ballinasloe Care and Repair were also recipients of further financial support having identified fuel poverty in the community as a big problem. The project was successful because of our work with the great team of volunteers from the Care and Repair team. I also had the opportunity to link in with the residents’ committee in St Teresa’s, St Anne’s and St Grellan’s just before Christmas, when we were able to support the committee to run their annual Christmas social event. It was great to witness the fantastic efforts of all these local groups and look forward to working with them again this coming year” she enthuses.

In 2022 I will be giving priority to smaller marginalised groups in the local area and helping community groups to become better able to address issues such as tackling isolation and promoting education and lifelong learning prospects at grass roots level. I will be working to enhance existing strengths within the communities and helping groups to embrace innovation. This is particularly needed with the likely easing of COVID-19 restrictions and the revival of groups that have faced challenging times. I will also be assisting community groups in grant applications, encouraging networking and working with older people’s groups to ensure continued or better access to services, work with New Communities, traveller groups and with disadvantaged youth.

Since starting my position I am very grateful for the support I have received from local agencies, colleagues and community groups. I look forward to 2022 and working alongside community groups and also working in collaboration with various agencies and governing bodies. I can be contacted at kgavin@grd.ie (087) 6217917 Monday – Friday.

Her colleague, Marie Finnerty, a Development Officer works with individuals on a one-on-one basis to support their access to vital services. Marie assists with job ready supports such as CV Preparation, Interview Skills and completing application forms and also shares information, advocates for people with other services and refers them on to other organisations. You can contact Marie at mfinnerty@grd.ie (087) 1870689.

Linda Cummins, her other colleague in the Ballinasloe office is the Tús Scheme Supervisor, providing assistance through Tús, a community work placement scheme. Tús placements are with community groups and organisations which provide supports and assist in delivering services within the local community. You can contact Linda at lcummins@grd.ie (087) 368 6347 for further information.



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OFFICE OPENING NOTICE

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

Please contact for information and advice regarding:

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



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LOCAL PROPERTY MARKET 2021

I would have made a bet with anyone that the first of the lockdowns of March 2019 would have led to a reduction in house prices in the coming months and indeed years. Luckily nobody took me on with my bet!! The house prices went the complete opposite direction and instead of collapsing they have been increasing ever since. We can see this increase even more since the beginning of 2020 especially in Ballinasloe and similar East Galway towns like Loughrea, Athenry and Tuam.

Bidding wars have been common all year round which is frustrating for the purchasers but a great result for sellers. And although the general media tend to sympathise with the buyers it has taken a long time for the people of Ballinasloe to see their house prices return to Celtic Tiger levels. Indeed in some cases they haven't quite reached this level to date.

I recall selling one particular property in a lovely estate in Doire Beg, Derrymullen in around 2017/2018. It was one of my last good sales before the crash. This house was a 4 bed detached home in excellent decorative order and at that time the house made €310,000. So circumstances changed and the house was placed on the market in 2013. The house was more run down than when it was on the market in 2007. Guess what it sold for then? Only a mere €95,000!! Yes Folks a whopping 69% of a drop!!! I knew these new buyers were getting a bargain and fair play to them as they purchased right at the bottom of the market.

So scroll forward to 2021 and John Dolan Auctioneers gets instructed on a house in Doire Beg, Derrymullen. We decided to put it on at an asking price of €225,000, which sounded like a fair price at the beginning of the year. However after an intensive bidding war between a number of parties

By John Dolan



the house sold for €280,000. A great price, however still not at the level we were at in 2007. So this level of increase is right across the board with both town and country properties which equates to approximately 20 to 25% for last year alone. This was reflected with sales in our other office in Galway city where properties in Knocknacarra, Doughiska and other towns like Athenry and Loughrea all experienced competitive bidding wars and a shortage of supply.

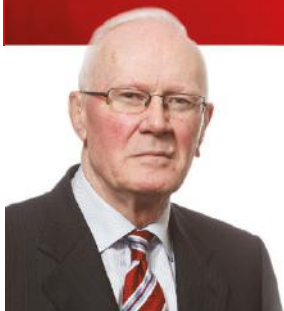
Rents on the other hand have surpassed their level of any Celtic tiger era. A good 4 bed semi-detached in an area like Creagh now will rent for



Doire Beg, Derrymullen.

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€1,200 per month, which is difficult if you are a first time buyer couple trying to save for a deposit.

With no new houses being built locally for the last 10 to 11 years, supply is still a big problem and will remain a problem for the next few years. As well as that houses were seen as more affordable in Ballinasloe than the likes of Galway city which has also contributed to price increases locally. Added to the fact that a lot of people who can work remotely and maybe spend one day in the office in Dublin or elsewhere. We all know what the convenience of Ballinasloe with easy commutes to Dublin by road or by train. Not only that but when you look at the large Tesco, Aldi, Lidl, Shearwater Hotel, great primary and secondary schools and an excellent hospital the town has a lot to offer and is holding its own amongst its

neighbouring Galway County towns

It's been a very successful year for sales at John Dolan Auctioneers but supply will remain the big challenge going forward for 2022.

For more information on this press release contact John Dolan Auctioneers in Main Street, Ballinasloe or Gray Office Park, Headford Road, Galway on 0868206690.

SWITCH YOUR FINANCES TO CREDIT UNION & SAVE

By Robbie Gately

Ballinasloe



Credit Union

As we ease into the new year, many of us will take time to reflect on our financial situation. With the excesses which Christmas time can bring (which impact both our waistlines and particularly our finances), the early months of the year can be a challenging and stressful time.

If you have built up a number of loans or debts from a variety of different providers, you may begin to feel like your finances are getting out of control and starting to cause you stress. Trying to manage and keep track of multiple debts from a variety of lenders can be a burden.

A debt consolidation loan, or a loan to clear other loans, is a new, single loan that essentially combines more than one outstanding debt. This could, for example, combine your credit card debt, personal loan repayments, moneylender loan, outstanding car finance or an overdraft into one single weekly or monthly payment.

Commenting on their personal Loan, lending Manager of BCU John Heapes said "if people are experiencing higher than normal interest rates, and you want to find ways to control and pay off these debts in a much simpler manner then consolidating their debt is an option for you. There is no confusion or

worry with a Consolidate loan. The interest rate is just 7.75% APR* with fair and transparent terms and conditions.

Those looking to borrow from Ballinasloe Credit Union can do so in the office on Main Street or online via the website www.ballinasloecreditunion.ie. The online lending service allows people to apply for a loan and draw it down from the comfort of home. The funds are lodged to your designated account.

Finance to consolidate your existing loans with other financial providers is available up to €50,000 at 7.5% apr over 5 years. For more information contact Ballinasloe Credit Union at 0909643179 or on check out the website www.ballinasloecreditunion.ie

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The Town Team – Christmas Lights Committee are busy planning next year's illuminations – first review meeting has already been held to detail the campaign for 2021.

All will agree that it was a very subdued and different Christmas build up for everyone in the community with the tightening of restrictions and people very afraid and worried about contacts and infections.

The Committee had made some good grant applications to Galway County Council, had squirreled away a surplus from last year's phenomenal draw campaign and were thrilled with the solidarity shown by the Credit Union in the sponsorship of €6,000 from their Social and Community Fund.

Income	
Online Raffle Sales	€ 6,950.00
Cash Raffle Sales	€1,989.59
Business Contributions	€4,349.25
Grant Aid/Funding:	
Ballinasloe Credit Union	€6,000.00
Galway County Council: CSS Scheme	€3,000.00
	€22,288.84
Expenditure	
New Lights	€1,348.58
Installation, Repairs & Storage	€21,312.50
Raffle Costs	€2,448.97
Electricity & Insurances	€2,301.59
	€27,411.64
Deficit	-€5,122.80
Other Income	
Surplus 2020	€7,600.00
GCC Rural Scheme (yet to be received)	€5,000.00
	€12,600.00
Funds For 2022	€ 7,477.20

Perhaps momentum was lost a little when it was not possible (for the same reasons that practically all large crewed performances – like Panto got cancelled) to host our traditional switching on ceremony at the Tree – we did a fbook live event instead.

The sluggishness in ticket sales to support the lights project, despite the generosity of new sponsors to come on board with marvellous prizes, meant that income was depleted. The business subscriptions collections was also down but after the year and especially Christmas build up that retail and hospitality had, it was to be expected.

Luckily the team decided to only add modest additional features – trees on the Green and around the Marina – if more was invested, we would be in a more difficult place.

Liam and Matt Kenny again were thanked for the installations and James Burke was thanked as the Contributions Co-ordinator.

Despite these issues the illuminations display were warmly received and made their way into countless of photos and social media messages from our town over the festive season.

Chair Seamus Duffy remarked “We'd like to thank all those who bought tickets, sponsored prizes, funded the costs and all the volunteers who gave of their time for this project – it's a huge undertaking every year but very, very worthwhile.”

Any new ideas on financing or delivery of lights to the Town Team please.

Christmas Lights Draw Winners 2021

Liz Daly	Utah Department Store €500 Voucher
Marta Kenny	Campotel €1,000 Voucher
Kevin Ahern	Gadget Tech & Office Supplies €250 Voucher
Caroline O'Hare	Shop Ballinasloe €1,000 Voucher
Catherine Behan	Supervalu €250 Voucher
Phil Lloyd	Corrib Oil 500 Ltrs Home Heating Oil
Janette Glynn	Dillon's Tyres €250 Voucher
John Blaine	SO Hotel Group €500 Voucher
Ida Cunnane	Garbally Oil 500 Ltrs Home Heating Oil
Denise Treacy	Cahalan Jewellers €250 Voucher
Karyn & Kevin Gavin	Shearwater Hotel 3 Day Family Break
Laura Judge	Gerry Stronge €300 Wedding Photography Voucher
Lorna Blake	Kelly Motor Factors €250 Voucher
Ray Martin	Dubarry €250 Voucher

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Pictured at the Lucky Dip, Christmas Lights 2021 Draw on the 19th of December were most of the finalists or their representatives.

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTION LIST

DIRECT CASH CONTRIBUTIONS

AIB
An Tain
Ballinasloe Opticians
Bank Of Ireland
Barrett's/Chadwick's Hardware
Bar One Racing
Billy Goode Dry cleaners
Bistro 18
Bread Basket
Brian Lynch Motor Factors
Bruen Brothers and Co.
Clarke & Sons
Darren Goode RGR Partners
Delaney's Home Furnishings
Duane's Healthwise Pharmacy
Dunlo Tavern
Emmet House Dental Practice
First Stop Barbers
Fletchers Expert Electrical
Goode's Dry Cleaners
Gullane's Hotel & Conference Centre
Healy's Pharmacy
Jack Duncan & Co Solicitors
Joe's Bar
Joseph M Jordan & Company Solicitors
Karibas Restaurant & Coffee House
Kellers of Ballinasloe
Michael McCullagh Auctioneers
Mighty Cabs Taxi & Bus Hire
Moran Court Vets
Murphy's Total Health Medical Hall
Niall Hogan Menswear
Noonan & Cuddy Solicitors
Patrick Hogan & Co Solicitors
Talking Heads Hair & Beauty
Tomas Barbers
Utopia Hair Design

RAFFLE TICKETS SALES

AIB
An Post
Animal Health Centre
Araya Business Services
Ballinasloe Credit Union
Bank of Ireland
Barrys Cycles
Billy Goode Dry Cleaners
Billy King Pharmacy
Billy's Discount Store
Bistro 18
Boss Brows
Bread Basket
Brewery Lane
Caroline Hairdressers
Carry Out Off Licence
Clarkes & Sons
Colourful Things
Conneely Building & Civil Contractors
Cregg Stone
Croffy Dry Cleaners
Cuckoo Hill
Dolans Electrical
Duanes Healthwise Pharmacy
Dunlo Tavern
Eimear Loughnane Solicitors
Emmett House Dental Practice
Euro Spar
EV Energy
Fairy Dog Mother
First Stop Barbers
Gerry Stronge Photography
Gibbons Bar & Restaurant
Gills Drycleaners
Glamour Hairdressers
Grenhams Off Licence
Gullanes Hotel & Conference Centre
Healy's Pharmacy

RAFFLE TICKETS SALES

Height of Health
Hogan & Co Solicitors
Hutchison Davidson Solicitors
J&S Photos
Joe Wards Menswear
Joes Bar
Jorenas Health & Gift Shop
Joseph M Jordan & Company Solicitors
Karibas Restaurant & Coffee House
Kathleens Fashions
Keller's of Ballinasloe
Kidz Korner
Leahys Pharmacy
Marina Downey
McGorisks Pharmacy
Mike O'Reilly ORBS
Mulvey Fruit & Veg Shop
Paddy Keane Auctioneers
Renate Kohlmann Consulting
Ruane Florist
Salmons Department Store
Seamus Duffy New Ireland Insurance
Sean Connolly Butchers
Sky Blue Counselling
Society Travel
The Compliance Team
The Deli Store
The Front Room
The Study Centre
Tony Carroll Butchers
Top Man
Tranquillity Beauty Salon
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Utah Outdoors
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Vals Vintage Cupboard
Willie Burke Shoe Repairs
Wonderland Hair & Beauty

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Completing a GRETB Training Course offers many benefits from a personal and career perspective. A Course will also provide you, the learner, with access to employment opportunities in the future by developing your skills to compete in the employment market. GRETB have a variety of courses planned for 2022 starting Spring 2022 with Employment Skills (Forklift, Safepass & Manual Handling), CompTIA IT Fundamentals, Pitman Payroll Award and Bus/Minibus Driving.

Spring 2022 continues with offerings in HGV Artic and HGV Rigid, Door Security Courses and Approved Driving Instructor Course.

The Cleanroom Operator Training course offers training to those wishing to seek employment in the medical device manufacturing industry in Galway.

Traineeships such as the IT Support Specialist, Beauty Therapy and Pharmacy Retail Sales offer substantive work placements opening doors to a career in these industries.

The Centre has fully equipped workshops for Carpentry & Joinery, Plumbing, Electrical, Motor Mechanic and Metal Fabrication for Apprenticeship delivery and CAD/CNC and Welding.

Apprenticeship programmes for Galway & Roscommon are administered through the GRETB Training Centre. An Apprenticeship is a programme which combines learning in the workplace with learning in a Training Centre or Educational College. They vary from 2 years to 4 years in duration and range from QQI level 5 to QQI level 9. As well as the traditional trades such as Plumbing and Electrical, there are Apprenticeships in Auctioneering, Manufacturing, Software Developer, Accounting Technician, Insurance Practitioner and many more. GRETB will welcome the new apprentices on the Arboriculture Apprenticeship and Craft Butchery Apprenticeship in Spring 2022.

Under the Government funded Skills to Advance initiative, Employers can avail of highly and fully funded training to help and benefit their organisation, whether it's to improve their employees' skills level, respond to the changing nature of business or help them take advantage of emerging opportunities. Upskilling staff is central to delivering long term sustainable growth and coping and adapting to the rapid change we have experienced in the past year.

The Training Centre offers flexible training including evenings and weekends at a time that suits in areas such as Door Guarding Security, IT, Manufacturing, Training & Development, Engineering and Welding.

All courses are certified and accredited by national and internationally recognised examining and professional bodies.

All courses will run subject to current government guidelines and Covid 19 restrictions.

Apply for courses on www.gretbtrainingcentre.ie or phone 091 706200 for further information. You can message GRETB on Facebook or follow them on twitter.



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BEC
Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre
An initiative of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

BACD Ltd are looking for an Administration Manager

Duties:

- Day to day management of the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre and the Pulse Hub

Requirements:

- Previous Office experience essential (minimum 1 year)
- Strong knowledge of Microsoft Office, Surf Accounts (or similar), Revenue on Line, Content Management Systems and Facebook/Instagram/Twitter
- Well organised but flexible to meet changing demand

Offer: Full time Permanent position: €35-€45k per annum (depending on experience).

For full details see www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie
Closing date for application February 28th.

The preferred route corridor for the Athlone to Galway greenway is Red Route 5, with a spur to Ballinasloe town.

The route, which is 255km in total will go from Athlone, with the town being the first stop in the west and onwards then to Portumna, Gort, Kinvara to Galway. The decision follows an extensive public consultation process and many meetings with landowners. The spur will be circa 20km with the route tapping into an emerging cycling tourism market. The town was seen as an ideal section of the route as it has the added advantage of having an exit on the M6 motorway which allows for greater accessibility for all visitors.

Some negative reaction from North Galway and Suck Valley Way Communities greeted the early December announcement as well as some questioning as to the viability of a spur link for Cyclists who will have to pedal back the same 20 km having come for a visit to reconnect with their way marked Westerly Route.

Spurs are becoming more common in Greenway development – the Mullingar to Lough Owel and the Achill Spur to Mulranny just two that have been completed in recent years. The success of the spur lies in the attractiveness of what can be viewed on the spur and the quality of visitor offering the terminal point.

Work on the project should commence in 2024 and is it hoped that the cycleway will open to the public in 2025.

Senator Dolan welcomed the news “There is such excitement to know that Ballinasloe will be the first stop in the West for the Galway to Athlone Cycleway. We are at a criss-cross of motorways, waterways, railways, walkways and now the Cycleway. This multi-million-euro investment into Ballinasloe will revitalise our region and make us a base in the West to join the Cycleway” she concluded.

The emerging preferred route, according to Senator Dolan, will come along by Athlone Castle through Roscommon along the Shannon down through Moore. “It will cross the Ballinasloe to Shannonbridge road, beyond Clonfad church, taking the Bord na Móna railway line across to Kylemore and join the Grand Canal towpaths at Kylemore, then through Lismany, Clontuskert, Kellysgrove to Poolboy to reach the Marina in Ballinasloe” she explained.

Local TD Denis Naughten believes that the track should pass through Kellysgrove Bog, adjoining the town. “Plans are now underway to rehabilitate the

Bog and I believe that this should be developed into a public park for the wider Ballinasloe area. Such a park, with the inclusion of the Greenway, would tie in with the Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Tourism brand which is promoting the region using a number of key tourism corridors,” said Naughten.

Cllr. Evelyn Parsons also commented on the matter “I believe the new Greenway must be routed along the canal, through Kellysgrove Bog, where I am committed to the development of a public park. With a population of 6,700 people constrained within the town centre this highlights the need for a facility such as a public park, particularly with the current closure of the track at Dunlo. I have urged Galway County Council to engage with Bord na Mona at an early stage regarding the development of a park and trails,” she stated.



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Oliver Kelly, son of Mary Kelly and the late Liam Kelly, Creagh, Ballinasloe has been very recently appointed new CEO of Kerry Group North America - with a company he has served with distinction since his graduation.

Kerry Group has announced that Oliver Kelly will lead its North America operations from the beginning of this year. In a statement, the company confirmed that Kelly will take over as president and CEO of the division from January 1, 2022.

According to the statement, Oliver Kelly has held numerous commercial and management roles over the past 30 years. The Ballinasloe native joined Kerry in 1991 after graduating from University College Dublin (UCD) with a degree in agricultural science. He moved to North America from Ireland in 2018 after leading the company's strategic growth in the food service channel for the Europe region.

Previously Oliver was Vice-president of Global Accounts for Kerry Group's Ingredients and Flavours, EMEA Division. Oliver has more than 20 years' experience in the FMCG industry working across numerous areas of the food and beverage portfolio and high end customer relationship management and development.



In 1994 Oliver relocated and was promoted to Sales Manager for the Red Meat business in the United Kingdom a position which he held until 1997 when he transferred to the Ingredients and Flavours side of the business to take up the role of Sales Manager for the Bakery division.

During 1998 he was again promoted and took on the role of Director of Sales - Bakery for the UK and Ireland, a position he held for two years. In 2000 Oliver's leadership talents were again recognised as he was appointed as General Manager for the Sweet and Cereal business. During his time in the role he worked with many well-known names and brands to increase and enhance their relationships with the Kerry Group.

In 2008, Kerry expanded Oliver's role to encompass end use markets across EMEA. A mix of specialist knowledge, management capability, relationship building capability and sales savvy saw him increase many of the relationship Kerry had in the region.

Commenting on the new appointment, Gerry Behan, president and CEO of taste and nutrition at the company, said: "Throughout his career, Oliver has demonstrated sustainable success in building and leading effective teams that fuel business growth for Kerry and for our customers. He has also shown a clear passion for driving change and a personal commitment to promoting a more inclusive workplace within Kerry. I am looking forward to working with Oliver as we work towards creating a world of sustainable nutrition," Behan said.

"Being able to be entrepreneurial with customers. Kerry constantly changes, but in a strategic and customer-focused way, allowing for exponential career growth is one of the best parts about working at Kerry", states Oliver.

Kerry is the among the world's leading taste and nutrition companies for the food, beverage and pharmaceutical markets. It employs over 22,000 people across the world, including a global research and development team of over 1,100 food scientists.

The company, which run a €100 million innovation centre in Naas, Co. Kildare, has pledged to reach over two billion consumers with sustainable nutrition solutions by 2030.

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Local man Aiden Sheridan will attempt to swim the length of the River Shannon, in aid of the Irish Cancer Society and East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support. The 43-year-old carpet fitter by trade, will set off on his incredible voyage starting in Dowra Co. Cavan and onto his final destination in Curraghgour, Co. Limerick, swimming a total of 245km in 14 days.

Aiden is the youngest son of Tommy and Eilish Sheridan, who were prominent in various businesses in town prior to their retirement. The motivation behind Aiden's journey is that cancer has taken a devastating toll on his family. In 2015, his sister Jennifer was diagnosed with the illness and thankfully made a full recovery. In 2017, Aiden's brother Mark sadly passed away shortly after being diagnosed with the disease.

'In the couple of days leading up to when he passed away, he was slugging me because I had ran the 52 marathons in 52 weeks for my sister Jennifer the previous year' Aiden said. 'He was slugging me saying: "You did that for her, what are you going to do for me now?"' he added.

Four years on and Aiden has decided to take on the challenge and his rigorous training regime has begun. He swims 2 hours, at 6.30 am daily, at this local hotel pool in Galway city where he lives. Aiden has set up an 'iDonate' fundraising page online at www.idonate.ie/aidensheridan and he is encouraging everyone to donate to the two worthy causes.

"I would encourage everyone to make a donation because, as my family knows, cancer

can strike anyone at any time, and it is so important that as much funding as possible is put into trying to find a cure for this devastating disease and into helping those who provide vital services to cancer patients and their families" he states. Support can also be shown by sharing the Facebook and Instagram pages, 'Sheridan Swims the Shannon'.

The marathon voyage swim is scheduled to take place on the July 15 this year.





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Pat Ward

Western Automation (WA), based in Poolboy, is now entering its 38th year in business. In recent years, WA started supplying new technology for Electric Vehicle charging devices and EV charging stations, and this technology is now being supplied to over 70 companies worldwide.

WA has also seen strong growth in demand for its Arc Fault Detection (AFD) technology as the use of arc fault protection devices is being mandated in more and more countries. To

meet the demand for products and services WA is currently going through a major expansion. A full refurbishment of the 1991 production facility is currently underway in Poolboy and will be completed around May 2022.

This will double their factory space to 16,000 square feet and will facilitate the recruitment of additional engineers to further expand the R & D facility. The company was set up by Mr Pat Ward to provide technology for electrical safety applications as used by some of the leading electrical equipment manufacturers in the world. This life-saving technology interrupts the supply when it senses dangerous fault currents in AC or DC installations. WA also provides technology for protection against dangerous arc fault currents and thus prevents electrical fires.

To date, over 70 million products containing WA technology have been used worldwide

and have contributed to preventing numerous fatalities.

WA has been a provider of employment to numerous people such as Production Operatives, Mechanical and Electronics Engineers, and owes its success to these people and its substantial investment in Research and Development to drive continuous improvements in its various technologies. WA also has an R & D facility in Spain, employing eight engineers there.

WA welcomes applications for employment from people in the Ballinasloe catchment area, so if you are interested in being part of the exciting story of this local company, please refer to the advertisement on page 31 of this publication for further details.

2022 – EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH

By Robbie Gately

EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH 2022



sustainability, mental health and well-being, and quality employment.

Programmes such as ErasmusPlus and the European Solidarity Corp will have increased funding available and will provide support for those who wish to volunteer, study, complete an apprenticeship, or undertake a work placement or find a job in another country.

The new year usually brings lots of change for us all, and the European Union is no exception. In recognition of all the challenges which have been faced over the last two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, the EU has declared 2022 the European Year of Youth.

The European Year of Youth has four main objectives: highlighting how the green and digital transitions offer opportunities for young people; helping young people to become active and engaged citizens; promoting opportunities available to young people; bringing a youth perspective to the Union's policies

What will this mean for young people in Ballinasloe? Working together with other EU institutions, Member States, civil society organisations, and young people, the European Commission will organise a number of activities throughout the year at European, national, regional, and local levels. The scope of activities will cover issues that mostly affect young people, following the priorities highlighted in the Youth Goals, such as equality and inclusion,

The European Youth Portal has easy access information and an interactive map of activities happening across Europe as well as a specific European Year of Youth page. Closer to home you can follow Europe Direct Ballinasloe, based at Ballinasloe Public Library, on Twitter and Facebook (@EDBallinasloe) to keep up to date with what is happening. You can also email your queries to ballinasloe@galwaylibrary.ie or call 091-509551.

It's a great year to be a young European!

Niall O’Callaghan and five of his friends set off on a gruelling fundraising mission before Christmas. The group of friends decided to attempt the Couch to 10,000k challenge. Their goal was to run 10,000k between them in 30 days.

The motivation behind the project was Niall’s father who was diagnosed with terminal cancer last year. Niall wanted to do something to honour his dad. The boys wanted to raise money for the East Galway Midlands Cancer Support, who provide incredible free support to cancer patients and their families. They rely heavily on donations to continue to provide their services so that’s where the idea for the task came from.

Niall, Darragh Stephenson, Graeme Gullane, Conor Noone, Fin Dowling and Jacob Routledge were the men to take on the mission. The group ran 167km each throughout the month which was an average of 5.6km per day. The local community got on board with the mission and supported the boys through the Go Fund Me page that they set up online and through cash donations in Gullane’s Hotel.

At the end of the 30 days, the group of friends were physically shattered while the support they received was incredible. They managed to raise €8,000 for the

organisation. Niall said: “The support has been absolutely unbelievable. Never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined that we have raised €8,000. The generosity from the public surpassed any of our expectations.”



(L-R) Darragh Stephenson, Niall O’Callaghan and Conor Noone present cheque to Jacqueline Daly Director of Services of East Galway Midlands Cancer Support.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS DAY SWIM

Rachel Staunton and her family braved the elements on Christmas Day as they went for a swim in the River Suck to raise vital funds for the East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support. The family also brought their dog, Daphne, along for a chilly swim! They managed to raise €850 for their efforts which was warmly welcomed by the Centre.



Staunton family swimming



Rachel Staunton presents cheque to Jacqueline Daly

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The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland has given the green light to go ahead with the setting up of a local Branch of the IWAI (River Suck Navigation Branch), which will raise the profile and represent the users of the local waterways.

With the Suck to Shannonbridge Navigational channel installed in the late 90s and operational for cruiser traffic in 1999 there has been a noticeable stagnation of user traffic to the town's two Marinas by both hire and owner craft in the last few seasons.

Many locals have been frustrated with lack of small craft slips and occasional boating access. The establishment of an Inland Waterways Association Suck Branch may be a good platform to address some of these deficiencies.

The IWAI is Ireland's largest organisation of water users and the benefit of having a local branch is to unite all users of the river and foster a community that can help each other and encourage social activity on the Suck. The main objective is to get boat owners and people and tourists who hire boats to be made aware that the river and the town has loads to offer and it will be a highlight of any trip along the Shannon.

Graham Bartlett, the man who is spearheading the new local branch set up states "We have a wonderful Marina in town and it's very much under-utilised, an increase in traffic on the Suck will increase visitors to the town and all its shops, bars, restaurants etc. Ballinasloe should be the hotspot to visit, to go fishing, shopping, to dine out, and maybe have a few drinks."

A local branch will also result in the likes of Boat Rallies and other activities such as walks,

hikes, talks being arranged. The IWAI publishes and distributes a magazine 4 times a year in which each branch gets a page dedicated to reporting on local issues and promoting what's on offer.

You don't have to be a boat owner, or fishing permit holder to become a new member.

The branch hopes to get set up in the early part of the year. Bartlett added "I hope the formation of the local branch will have a good level of local membership. I would also like to see local businesses participating in the promotion as ultimately it will benefit them also."

If anyone would like to be part of the project you can send a message to the Facebook page 'River Suck Navigation Branch (IWAI) Start up' to express your interest.



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Soroptimist Ballinasloe & District, the youngest of 15 clubs in Ireland, eventually celebrated their 25th Anniversary with a luncheon in Gullane's Hotel prior to the last round of restrictions.

National President Mary Kerr and other members from Athlone, Mullingar and Castlebar were all in attendance. The guest speaker for the event was the distinguished poet and writer Rita Kelly, originally from Brackernagh in the town.

The afternoon also included a candle lighting ceremony to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the foundation of the Soroptimists International Movement. Originally intended for Autumn of 2020 - the pandemic shuffled the dates for two seasons till they got a window prior to the October restrictions were imposed again.

Marie Rose Cullinan gave a talk on the formation of the local group and its achievements over the last 25 years. President Myrnrne Kelly then expressed her appreciation to everyone for making the event such a special day. She complimented Rita Kelly and Senator Aisling Dolan for their contribution and longstanding member Kathleen Croffy for her excellent job as MC for the day.

The Club committed to local, national and international communities. was founded in 1995 by the late Cepta Connolly, the founding president. Since then, in addition to national and international SI projects, the club has raised €180,000 for local charities.

Soroptimist International is a worldwide association for women working through Awareness, Advocacy and Action, the principal objectives are - The advancement of the status of women, high ethical standards, Human rights for all, Equality, development, and peace, through international goodwill,



From Left: Kitty McHugh, Maire Hughes, Marie Finnegan and Marie Connolly, acting President.

PRO Marie Connolly presenting Graveyard Bench.

Marie Connolly PRO and Marirose Cullinane Friendship Link.

Betty Noone and Maura Joyce, Programme Action Officer.

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As further acknowledgment of the anniversary the society held a mass for all the deceased members from the area. Programme Action Co-ordinator Maura Joyce organised the presentation of a bench in Creagh Cemetery in their memory. An Oak sapling that was donated by the Tree Council of Ireland was planted replacing the old tree which had fallen in a recent storm.

The group also engaged with and supported the "Orange the World" campaign which supports Violence against Women. The event lasted for 16 days. Together in partnership with Women's Aid and Cope in Galway, a large poster was erected at the Marina in the town to showcase the SI's longstanding commitment to ending gender-based violence.

Earlier in the year the society organised and ran a very successful public speaking competition which is a long-running tradition of the association. There were 21 entrants in total with students from Ard Scoil Mhuire, Holy Rosary Mountbellew, Presentation Tuam, Woodford and Dunmore taking part. PRO Marie Connolly thanked

everyone who was involved.

The Soroptimists were forced to cancel their 2021 Christmas Party, but they hope to plan a big event in Spring 2022!

Sadly, members assisted with the hosting of the first of a series of vigils and remembrance events for the murdered Aishling Murphy at the Dunlo Track on the Friday lunchtime after the killing in Tullamore that week. President Myrnrne Kelly joined with Cllr. Evelyn Parsons in signing books of condolence and the hosting of a candlelight vigil for the slain runner.

For those looking to become a member or to find out more about the club's forthcoming activities - please see their fbook page Soroptimists International Ballinasloe and District

or email siballinasloe21@gmail.com



L-R: Kitty McHugh, Myrnrne Kelly (President), Kathleen Croffy MC and Marirose Cullinane.

Kathleen Croffy MC and Myrnrne Kelly President.

President SI Ballinasloe Myrnrne Kelly and National President Mary Kerr.

New Bench installation at Creagh graveyard.

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The Ballinasloe Says No community group have succeeded in their third and most recent case in the High Court in Dublin. The group took legal action to prevent Galway County Council from granting a permit to operate a waste transfer station in April 2021 at Poolboy, Ballinasloe.

The Groups Chairperson Dr Vincent Parsons stated: "This is now the third High Court Order

preventing a Waste facility at this site in Ballinasloe. This is a clear message from the High Court yet again to Galway County Council. There is a significant risk to the environment; including adverse effects on the adjacent River Suck Callows and flood plains is a special area of conservation under EU law. We ask Galway CC to take cognisance of these findings and High Court Orders and refuse any application for a permit or extension or renewal of planning permission for this high-risk waste facility.

"We would like to thank the people of Ballinasloe and surrounding areas, who, despite the difficulties presented by Covid, have supported this campaign, including fundraising. A special word of thanks to our local legal team and Barristers, especially Gearoid Geraghty and Solicitors who have meticulously guided us through the complexities of the High Court. Hopefully we will not have to go there again," said Dr Parsons.

Co-founder and PRO of the campaign, Senator Aisling Dolan thanked everyone who got behind the campaign: "Thank you to our volunteers, clubs, schools, community groups, business community as well as all our public representatives. Ballinasloe Says No started in 2018 when we stood up to say No to hundreds of 10 ton, 15 ton and 30 tons trucks through the centre of town, past residential and urban areas, schools, playgrounds and Portiuncula University Hospital to access the site. How can this be smart planning? How does this keep children and families safe on our roads?"

"As a community, we were unaware of planning permission granted in 2016 and my brother Brian Dolan started the campaign. We fought against the first permit granted in 2018 all the way to the High Court. In 2019 our campaign led to the Council refusing the 2nd permit and now a win for our town at the High Court decision challenging the third permit. Close to 3,000 families submitted

objections to Galway County Council from 2018 even during a pandemic and severe lockdown," she explained.

Galway County Councillor Dr Evelyn Parsons also welcomed the ruling: "This decision vindicates the people of Ballinasloe and shows the commitment of our group. I am currently working on the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan for our town and it's clear this proposal is in contradiction to our goals and objectives.

"Throughout the Galway CDP process, I've championed the guiding principle of Environmental Justice for 'fair' distribution of environmental benefits and burdens to enable communities such as ours equitable opportunities to prosper within the county in terms of environment, quality of life, health and future economic growth opportunities including attracting investment and sustainable tourism," she added.



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Olympian Athlete David Gillick visited the school and spoke to the children about the importance of being active and keeping fit. Irish rugby star and past pupil Beibhinn Parsons also visited to present medals to 6th class on completion of the Marathon Kids Programme.

As part of their studies on the European Union, 6th Class held a live Zoom call with MEP Maria Walsh. The former Rose of Tralee winner spoke about her role in the European Parliament and how Ireland benefits by being part of the EU.

Coinciding with the arrival of a new polytunnel, the school set up a gardening committee, made up of staff with a passion for the outdoors (Caroline Gallagher, Fionnuala Colohan, Laura Gallagher). The idea behind this was to create a space where pupils can plant,

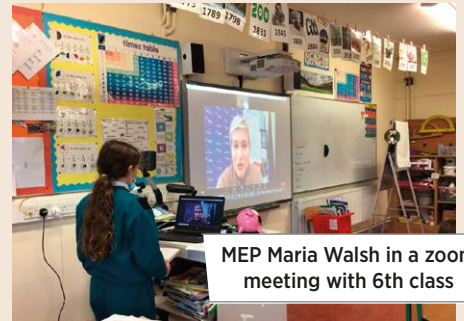
nurture and learn about the life cycle of plants, become invested in their surroundings and become custodians of their school environment.

The school continued its tradition of supporting the local Lion's Club Christmas Food Appeal. The school community responded remarkably when the request went out for contributions. Under the stewardship of Laura Gallagher and second class, the contributions were collected, sorted and dispatched in time for Christmas.

Miss Fox's second class and Miss Donohue's first class took part in the M.S. Readathon recently. The initiative required children to read as many books as they could throughout the month. As a result of the pupil's efforts, they raised in excess of €3,000 for M.S. in Ireland



Second class students with the cheque for MS Ireland



MEP Maria Walsh in a zoom meeting with 6th class



David Gillick poses with Creagh N.S. students

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The senior room had a lovely start back after the Christmas break when they got to check out the new books that were purchased for their class library, by the Parents Association for organizing their scarecrow competition in October which funded these books!



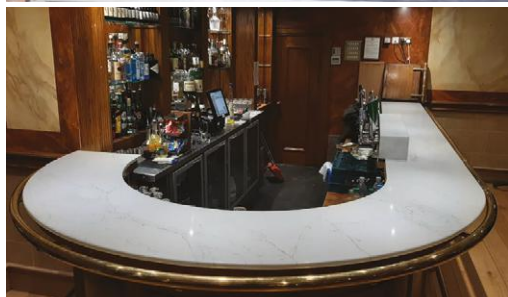
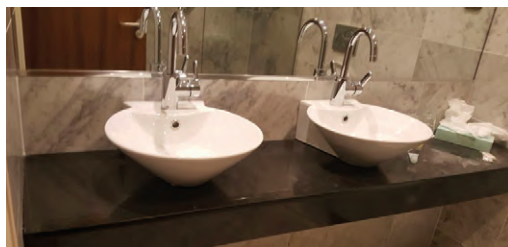
Clontuskert NS were thrilled and tweeted their Congratulations to former pupil Julie-Anne Greaney who now teaches at the Old Bower School, Athlone on winning the SciFest 2021 Teacher of Excellence Award at the SciFest National Final 2021. @TUS Athlone, before Christmas. Julie-Anne. lives locally in Kellysgrove with husband Damien and her two young boys Oliver & Luke.



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Transition Year students in Garbally College held a huge fundraising day for their chosen charities, the Simon Community and Ballinasloe Social Services recently before breaking up for their annual block week work experience.

The charity drive consisted of a pop-up barbershop, a soccer tournament, a car wash and a pop-up sweet shop. To add to the festivities a Little Spoon Mobile Coffee Shop van was at the school Concert Hall to provide much-needed refreshments for the school community. In the spirit of the event, the company donated half their turnover from the day to the Simon Community.

The pop-up barbershop was managed and run successfully by a team of transition year students led by Michael Keary, Jack Flaherty, and Ben Feehily. They secured the services of current Leaving Cert student Ryan Fallon, past pupil Kyle Blackweir and two local barbers Declan Broderick and Conor Duane. The Barber Shop operated at full capacity from 9am until 3.30pm. The turnover for the day was €630.

The soccer tournament

was organised and managed by TY students Tadhg McLaverty, Kai Grennan Keighery, Darragh Costello and Joshua McLaverty. They were amiably assisted by Enda Fournet, Conor Kelly and Eanna Kelly in the smooth operation of this event between 1st year and 2nd year students. Overall, the tournament raised €265.

TY students and 5th year Evan McMorrow operated a professional and successful car wash on the school's campus. Students got through a total of 30 cars on the day. The car wash raised €300.

The pop-up Sweet Shop was a welcome retreat for students during their lunch breaks. Students Eoin Grehan, Jack Finn, Keith Winters and Luke O'Connor operated the not-for-profit shop for the day.

When all the legal tender was counted at the end of a long day, €1,587 was raised by the combined efforts of all three TY classes. TY Programme Coordinator Ms. Roisin McSharry and Team Teachers Ms. Fiona Broderick and Mr. William Carr were very proud of their students' achievements in raising such a large amount of money for their chosen charities. A cheque for €900 will be presented to the Simon Community and a cheque for €687 will be presented to Ballinasloe Social Services in the coming weeks.



TY students Tadhg McLaverty and Joshua McCarthy along with a line of students ready to play in the Soccer Tournament.



Garbally Alumni and Barber Kyle Blackweir about to cut Garbally Principal Mr. Paul Walsh's hair.

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It's been a tough two years for many people in the community and one group who have had a tough time not being able to engage in their usual activities and meeting up with friends are young teenagers. Now a group of GAA parents are to create a Youth Club in the Ballinasloe GAA Clubhouse, located behind Supervaul in Brackernagh.

The launch of the club coincides in what has been a very difficult time for youth throughout the Covid pandemic and joining the club may be the perfect way to get back to socialising again.

The GAA nationally outlined the various benefits of being affiliated with a youth club which included, offering young people a safe space in their local community to come together to mix with their peers. It gives young people a sense of belonging in their community. Clubs can help individuals forge positive relationships/friendships with their peers and the leaders in the club. They also provide healthy, positive activities for young people, increasing their health, wellbeing, aspirations and engagement levels.

After a meeting with the GAA executive, funds were made available to purchase a pool table, an air hockey table, table tennis and football tables and stock was bought for a small tuck shop. As the Youth Club becomes established there will be games, competitions, age-relevant talks and some day trips away are planned when safe to do so.

The Youth Club began in November and takes place on Friday nights from 7.30pm to 9.30pm and is open to young teenagers who are in Secondary school and are members of Ballinasloe GAA and Ballinasloe Camogie Club. Each person attending can bring a friend who is not necessarily a member of

either club. It is hoped that the Youth Club initiative will help keep young people playing sport and will also encourage their non-playing friends to get involved in football, hurling, camogie.

The Club provides a social outlet for this cohort of young people to come together and enjoy themselves in a safe, supervised environment at a time of year when many of their sporting activities have not yet resumed.

There is a music system available for the members' use and the clubhouse is getting much more positive use during the GAA Club's offseason. There are club supervisors there at all times during the sessions. There is an admission fee of €3 each night.

For more information, go to the Ballinasloe GAA Facebook page or contact club organiser Kathryn Gibbons on (087) 904 6140.



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Brian Brennan Coaching is a new private gym based at the bottom of St. Michael's Square where Brian offers one to one Personal Training, Online Coaching and Small Group Fitness Classes, including Strength and Conditioning and Metabolic Conditioning. Classes are programmed in advance of each month and follow what is known as a linear periodization model, which means each month, the classes get a little bit harder, challenging your body to adapt and become fitter and stronger.

Brian ensures that people of all ages and abilities can take part: "No matter what exercise or movement we are working on in class, I provide you with the appropriate variation to match your current level of fitness, ensuring you get the most out of each visit" he states.

A native of Ballinasloe, he has been studying health and fitness since 2010. Starting off his exercise instruction career in the Shearwater Gym, where he worked from 2011-2014, before moving to Dublin to pursue his BSc. (Hons) in Exercise Management from University College Dublin.

A certified Strength and Conditioning coach, as well as a certified Precision Nutrition Level 2 coach, Animal Flow Level 1 and Steel Mace and BioForce Conditioning specialist, Brian states; "I've been lucky enough to work with and learn from some of the world's best coaches and leading experts over the past twelve years, including Mike McGurn, Ciaran Ruddock, and Joel Jamieson and I am excited to bring my



expertise to my hometown."

His priority is to achieve their health and fitness goals but also educate and help people to become self-sufficient when it comes to their exercise and nutrition routine.

Here is what one of Brian's clients had to say: "Brian is an amazing coach who motivates and challenges you to push your limits in every session. Brian's classes are very dynamic, and you will always be trying new exercises whilst progressing at others. Enrolling was one of the best decisions I made and I look forward to achieving new goals in the future."

You can book your free trial today to get to experience and test out the facilities for yourself. For information on pricing and memberships you can visit his website www.brianbrennan.ie, contact him via phone (087) 268 8004 or email info@brianbrennan.ie and you can follow him on Instagram @ [brianbrennancoaching](https://www.instagram.com/brianbrennancoaching).



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Tree Planting Remembrance

Just before Christmas, crowds gathered in the Famine Memorial Park, Cleaghmore for a remembrance tree planting ceremony. The event was organised by The Brothers of Charity Services, Ballinasloe who also donated the tree. The socially distant ceremony was officiated by Fr. Bernie Costello.

The event which took place in the spot known as Bullies' Acre was to remember those from the community who have passed away during the current COVID-19 Pandemic and all the bereaved families.

All attendees displayed candle lights which added a real sense of poignancy to the occasion. As darkness fell on a crisp December evening, the strains of Silent Night played by The Ballinasloe Town Band filled the air which was very appropriate given the time of year.

Evening concluded with parting words from Fr. Bernie, Marie Quinlan and Lucy Wallace.



Presentation of a Cheque to Ballinasloe Cancer Support Centre by the Parents of Dean O'Farrell who passed away on the 11th of January 2021 due to metastatic terminal esophageal cancer. Dean's family and friends raised €13,000 for the Ballinasloe Cancer Support Centre. Photo: Derek and Fiona O'Farrell presenting the Cheque to John McLaughlin and Liam Connaire of the Ballinasloe Cancer Support Centre.



Sean Ward and West-Bake Ltd, Glenamaddy donated muffins to the Day Care Centre for the Elderly for their afternoon tea. They were delicious!!

In this photo: Diana Walsh from Ballinasloe Day Care Centre and Sean Ward.



Ballinasloe Cycling club raised a total of €300 from the cycling club's Christmas charity spin. President Seamus Kelly presents the cheque to Olivia from the Portiuncula Hospital Patients Comfort Fund.



Town Hall Theatre Chairperson Maire Hughes and Cllr Dr. Evelyn Parsons on the announcement of her allocation of €5,000 notice of motion money to future refurbishment work on the building which is a protected structure - an important asset for Ballinasloe heritage, performance culture, social and community life.



For daily updates on news, events, death announcements and traffic updates - tune into our Local Radio Partner



Donnchadh Duane pictured at the National Community Games finals held at the University of Limerick recently. Donnchadh secured a bronze medal in the finals of the under 10 boys freestyle 25 meters

During the year BCU distributed over €50,000 to local groups, our most recent donation was to the Ballinasloe Town Hall theatre refurbishment project, pictured at the presentation of €5,000 from the Credit Union is Marian Brady BCU chairperson, Maire Hughes, Mary O'Regan Barber, Elaine O'Hanlon, Frances Leahy & Alan Harney.



Pictured at the presentation of €2000 to Ballinasloe Town AFC from the Credit Union social fund, l-r: Mikey Burke, Marian Brady BCU, Ellen Egan & Johnny Walsh.



Senator Aisling Dolan, Seamus Duffy (Chair BACD), Declan Doran (Business Development Coordinator TUS), Maria Walshe MEP, John McKenna (Vice President TUS & BACD Board), Seadna Ryan (Department of Lifelong Learning TUS), Eoghan Kenny (BACD Board) and Lyn Donnelly (BACD Manager) at the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) roadshow recently held in the Shearwater hotel.

Ballinasloe's annual Christmas Jumper Day was held recently and was yet again a resounding success. A group of volunteers TY Students from Ardscoil Mhuire assisted with the bucket collection on the day. Everyone from the local schools, playschools, shops and businesses decked out in their festive attire with all proceeds going to The Galway Hospice and Ballinasloe Social Services.

The fundraiser accumulated over €13,500 and counting with more lodgements to be made soon.

Geraldine Dean, a member of the organising committee stated "this was a phenomenal amount of money for a one-day fundraiser" and she acknowledged everyone who helped out. "We would like to thank everyone most sincerely again for their generosity and support on the day. We would also like to thank Ana Victoria Maloney, Ballinasloe Glass, Corrib Oil, Dubarry Shoes, Gullanes Hotel, Garbally Oil and Shearwater

Hotel for giving us amazing prizes to promote Christmas Jumper Day."

Formal proceeds presentations will be made to the two groups over the coming weeks.



L-R: Aisling Curley, Grace Dolphin, Teresa Coughlan, Diana Walsh & Grace Kenny bucket collecting

NEW COMMS TEAM FOR LIFE



Jack Treacy

What an end of a COVID cycle - Jack Treacy the Shannon Soccer Fan, who sat at the reporters and videographers bench for seven months and then reported and compiled the last two editions from his Erasmus Embassy in Denmark, slips into the annals of history with some great memory making moments and firsts.

His key day in the sun came with the first ever visit of the Tanaiste to the Enterprise Centre on a bright blue summery day and the U.L. undergraduate had to wait in line before a messy national media mob to patiently ask his questions

about community enterprise.

For a young man who knew little about public admin., community volunteering and dealing with PROS and subscribers he took to his task with gusto and elan. The Sanity of a very busy Editor was oft times saved by his erudite support. We thank him and wish him well in his studies and career.

We welcome our 20th Trainee Reporter-Robbie Gately-a 20 year old, Knockcroghery second-year student at the University of Limerick, studying Sociology in a Bachelor of Arts degree. He tells us he has a keen interest in sports, playing football, hurling for his local St. Dominic's and soccer for St. Johns. So no hopes of any transfers here this season. In 11 years he is the first Roscommon man to patrol the keyboard and phone for LIFE !

Like many of his years he has the travel bug and has visited Spain, Portugal, America,



Robbie Gately



Pierre Mantoulan

France, and Belgium and enjoys salads !

He is being joined as Trainee Videographer Pierre Mantoulan, a 20 year-old second year Business and Marketing Students from Bayonne Business College, in the South West of France. Pierre is a huge rugby player and fan and is looking for Lansdowne Road tickets to any International match this season. He also enjoys Irish boeuf and Guinness

and is hoping on seeing as much of the island and its charms over his programme. We hope they both enjoy working and getting to know us all over the coming editions.



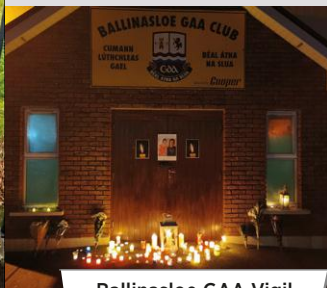
Moore Community Office Vigil



Soroptimists Vigil



Vigils were held around the country in memory of 23-year-old teacher **Ashling Murphy**, who was so cruelly robbed of her life in January in Tullamore. Moore Community Office, Ballinasloe GAA, Soroptimists Ballinasloe, were some of many groups to hold events as huge crowds gathered with lit candles, to lay flowers and to sign books of condolence to remember Ashling and support those who knew her and loved her.



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Bernadette Divilly (a Dunlo Street native) launched her new tome at a recent showcase in Galway Arts Centre's Nun's Island Theatre in December.

The new book *'Be Dance'* entails stories on Bernadette's residency, capturing her 'BeDance' practice and incorporating the professional BeDance Development Quartet. Published by Letterfrack based company, Artisan House, the launch night on December 21, coincided with the Winter Solstice and attendees took part in shoreline walk to Galway Bay afterwards to celebrate the solstice.

Divilly's Dance Artist Residency with Galway County Library Service began during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Bernadette had to turn to social media as a platform to showcase her dancing. "I created tutorial videos; made podcasts; conducted workshops and events using zoom. Be Dance is my own dance practice which evolved and took shape during 2020/2021" she explains.

BeDance is seen as a way to meditate, to move the body and mind, and to relate through playful dance exchange. It's used as a method to regulate the nervous systems and it allows for a diversity of dance movement skills and abilities, suitable for all adults regardless of dance experience.

In the book, Bernadette pays tribute to the participants, funders, and community members who got involved throughout the year. "I was keen to have a record of an extraordinary period which influenced the shape and structure of my residency. I took on the challenge in a playful, creative, and hopefully impactful way. The book pays homage, I hope, to all the participants, funders, and community who participated, and I wish to acknowledge the work of Artisan House in creating a publication that showcases this beautifully."

Manager of Ballinasloe Library Una Kelly commented on the benefits of Ms. Divilly's dance lessons: "Bernie's dance lessons were inspiring, bringing people from all parts of our community together in a safe and creative space either virtually or physically. It united people, created a community feeling of well-being, togetherness and support in difficult times. Everyone who took part felt united, had fun, and improved their physical and emotional health in a relaxed and very enjoyable environment."

Una Kelly hopes the Library can host more lessons in the future: "Before lockdown Ballinasloe Library was delighted to host a number of dance classes as well as lots of other community events. We are hoping that when restrictions lift, we will be able to resume all our community activities in the Church Gallery. We can't wait!"

Copies of the book are now available for loan in Ballinasloe Library. Further details on Bernadette's work can be found at www.bernadettedivilly.com



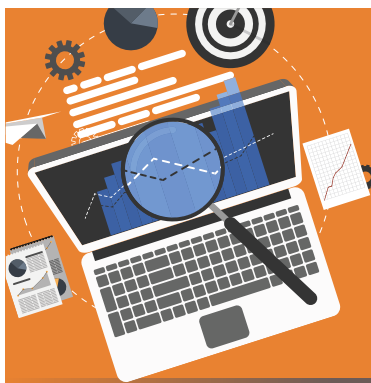
Be Dance Book



Bernadette Divilly
Be Dance



Mayor of Galway Cllr. Colette
Connolly and Bernadette Divilly.



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Following on from the success of the inaugural event, Ballinasloe Library's second annual Comic-Con was held recently, and it saw interviews, activities, workshops, talks, competitions take place.

The programme was a mix of virtual, live, and pre-recorded events. The weekend was stacked with all kinds of events with plenty going on for everyone. There were drawing Minecraft lessons, vintage comic reviews, animation workshops, makeup tutorials, and much more. There was also plenty of special guests who appeared including Scientist Barry Fitzgerald, Comic Book Writer Wayne Talbot, author and illustrator Alan Nolan, and the first female composer ever to score a DreamWorks film, Ballinasloe's own Amie Doherty all gave talks, advice, and insights to eager participants.

The highly anticipated Cosplay and Art competitions once again got everyone's creative juices flowing. The cosplay competition required participants to dress up as a character from a film, book, or video game. There was one competition for ages 12 and below and another for ages 13 and above. The art competition involved designing an animal superhero. Age groups for the competition were 4-8 year-olds and one for 9-12 year-olds. There were plenty of winners in both competitions, receiving a variety of prizes.



Ruby Brooks



Aaron Ward



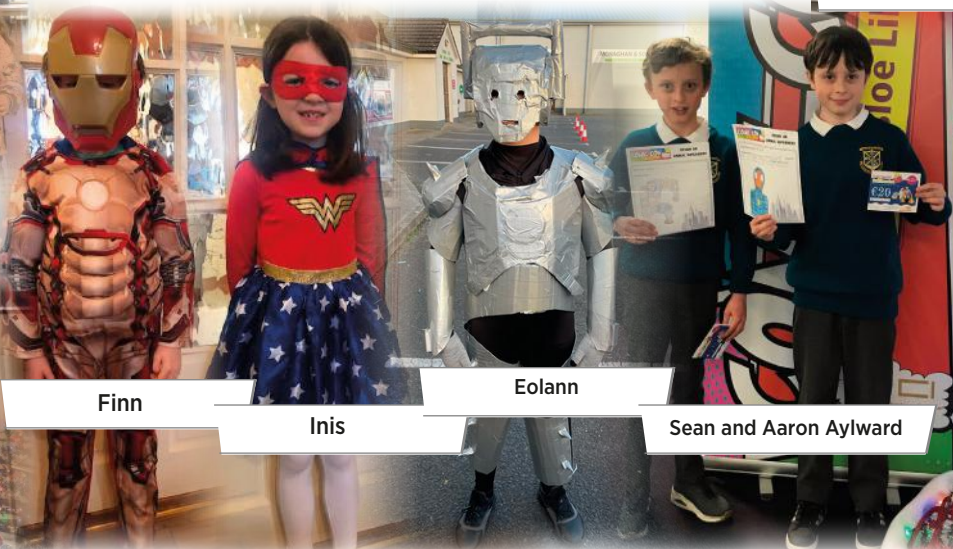
Paige



Ruth O'Connell



Max



Finn

Inis

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Starved of the opportunities to have live rehearsals together and public performance opportunities being limited the Town Band were still able to spread some festive cheer over the holidays.

Having adhered to precautions by practicing online, the group were disappointed when outings were cancelled before Christmas. However, the band managed to rescue a few of their planned public recitals. They performed at the Aughrim Open Air Christmas Market, supporting the East Galway and Midland Cancer Support Centre. Attendees at the event were treated to a broad selection of seasonal music and renowned Film Themes.

The band, under the baton of Noel Madden, also managed to entertain shoppers and raise some seasonal cheer with traditional Christmas Carols, when they parked their reindeers at the Christmas tree in St Michael's Square.

Their next two public performances had a high degree of emotion and poignancy when they performed at the Tuam Babies' Site for the third year in succession. They also played at the Bullies' Acre Memorial Park Event a new tree planting of remembrance for those bereaved during the Pandemic time

Work on the band hall (in the old Parochial Hall on Dunlo Hill) is nearing completion after many Covid related delays. Carpets will be laid in the offices and in the kitchen annex soon. The main hall floor is also undergoing sanding and staining to return it to its pristine condition. It is also intended to paint the exterior walls in the near future, if funding can be arranged.

The band's clothes collection fundraiser is also ongoing and has been extended until March. So, if you're thinking of discarding some old clothes, shoes, bags, belts, etc. contact Martina on (087) 971 0496 to discuss drop-off or collection.

Further details on all the Band's activities can be found on their <http://www.ballinasloetownband.ie/>



Ballinasloe Town Band supporting East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre Charity event at the Aughrim Open Air Christmas Market.

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2021 was another difficult year for all in the entertainment industry and the Town Hall Theatre certainly felt the effects of all the restrictions. For the second year in a row the Society's AGM was held on line.

Many productions and planned events had to be cancelled or postponed yet again, cutting off their biggest source of income and leaving the committee focused on trying to keep the Theatre afloat.

However, despite all the restrictions and uncertainty, the Committee worked incredibly hard over the course of the year: 27 official meetings were held, fundraising events took place, some €37,000 plus of grant aid was secured, much was achieved within the Hall and a number of events were able to take place. Chairperson Máire Hughes eloquently detailed all of this in her address.

Some of the highlights from the year include: The Hall's first ever live stream concert series, Seomra Eile, in association with Mike Casey and facilitated by Ben Parker; The hugely successful concert by The Stunning in October which was made possible thanks to Sharon O'Grady from the Galway Arts Office and the Governments Live Performance Programming Scheme; and the complete refurbishment of the foyer. Thanks in particular being paid to Director Elaine O'Hanlon who was responsible for the design and decorating, and Gerry Maloney and members of the CE Scheme who did the bulk of the physical work.

The space, which was last updated in the 1980's, has been completely transformed with the bar being replaced by a new box office featuring detailed woodwork, which is all complemented by a sophisticated and modern colour scheme and matching carpets. This work was made possible by grants received from both the Department of Culture and Galway Rural Development, along with community fundraising.

Treasurer Frances Leahy gave an overview of the Society's finances, detailing all income and expenditure. She presented the certified figures prepared by the Company's accountant Claire Curley - showing an income of €26,671, expenditure of some €29,073 and operating deficit of some €4,026 similar to the previous COVID Year. She highlighted the many generous donations that were received, many from groups who regularly use the Hall, long-time supporters and members of the wider community, which were so vital in keeping the bills paid and greatly appreciated.

Late 2021 saw the retirement of Mary O'Connell from the Committee, having being involved with the Society since its foundation. Many tributes

were paid to her on the night for her dedication to the Hall over the years. On behalf of the committee Máire thanked her for her sterling work and wished her well in her retirement, stating that she has been "the beating heart of the building." A former Secretary to the project acknowledged the "amount of effort, toil, work and care she gave to the building has been immense." This sentiment was reiterated by many including the last original Committee member still serving, Gerard Sweeney, who also paid tribute to her and all she's done.

The committee for 2022 are: Máire Hughes, Frances Leahy, Aoife Vaughan, Eoin Croffy, Alan Harney, Elaine O'Hanlon, Mary Barber, Ben Parker, Gerard Sweeney and Noel Lohan. Maire Hughes was keen to stress that they welcome and encourage people to get involved with the Society and the Theatre. "If you would like to become a society member, a volunteer or if you just want to share some knowledge or expertise then please don't hesitate to get in touch with any of us" stated Maire in conclusion. They can be contacted via the Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre Facebook and Instagram accounts, or by emailing info@ballinasloetownhall.com.



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The vivacious, generous and energetic distinguished poet and writer-Rita Kelly-despite all her travels, study trips, residencies and international acclaim, remains charmingly and convincingly connected to her native place.

Her story is part a formidable fairytale to her art, but also crusading. She discovered a huge interest in writing and poetry while being educated in Scoil Mhuire. Met one of the finest Gaelic/English Poet writers of his generation, on a walk in Brackernagh, became his wife some years later and struggled to carve a career in the world of literature part time in her early years but full time since the late 80s and critically after Eoghan O Tuairisc's untimely passing 40 years ago this August.

"My father was born in Poolboy, my mother was born in Castle Ellen, Athenry. They married in 1952, my father already had a butcher shop in Carrabane. My father Peter, though born in Ballinasloe was taken to his aunt's house, Margaret Clyne, in Clara, because his mother died when he was 9. Afterwards he sold that shop to Terry Crosbie on Society St." she details. Late in 1957 they moved to Clontuskert, Shanonbridge in 1963 and back to Brackernagh in the mid-60s.

Rita's schooling started in the old Clontuskert school, when it was adjacent to Master Fenton's house. "Mrs Coen was a wonderful teacher; I feel that I owe her so much in terms of my early imaginative formation. Her stories were a treat beyond belief" Rita recalls.

Her teenage years are crystal clear "Where I lived at 68 Brackernagh there were sounds from the Quarry which was at the back, more or less and you could see down along the neat cuts of limestone from our upstairs windows. The other magically thing was the Reservoir which was on a hill behind us. A big pipe came down the lane by Mrs Ryan's and sometimes water gushed out of it and flowed down Brackernagh.

"As school pals we headed back to Ancel's on Society St for a burger and chips or to Joe Hill's for a divine banana-split when we could afford it or when we pooled what we had so that sometimes in Ancel's it was one coke and 3 straws. We were living the café life on Society St and Supermac hadn't yet become a force" she gleefully recalls.

Sport was important to her also. "There was Duggan Park, with grass like silk. I played camogie, many of my town friends didn't, but it was a very important part of my life. I was thrilled to play on the town team as well as the

school teams."

She recounts the wonderful teachers too in Scoil Mhuire – like Sr Declan, Sr Leo. "Mary Moylan taught me French and English – the absolute thrill of how she brought poetry to life. It was one of the great moments of my education. Just with her methodology and her enthusiasm you would love French and English forever after that experience – if you were so inclined of course! I never had that same experience with maths!" she jokes.

After her leaving Cert in 1971, she worked in London for a bit but returned to work with EI Electrics in Shannon – rising to the rank of Quality Controller. "I bumped into Eugene Watters on the Hill of Brackernagh, late one night, I asked him to have a look at some of my poems and tell me if I were wasting my time. I knew who he was as we had studied his Irish poetry for Inter Cert at Scoil Mhuire and he spoke from the Town Hall stage when the Relays Drama Group had staged his 'Blue Daisies' which he had translated for them, from his original play in Irish: *Lá Fhéile Michíl*. The conversation we started that night lasted until he died in 1982" she recalls.

Various jobs and overseas opportunities abounded while she polished her craft and was appointed Writer-in-Residence for Co Laois in the late 80s (in later years she held that position for Co Cavan and for Co



Rita's husband
Eoghan O Tuairisc

Kilkenny). Late 1999, she was appointed Arts Officer for Co Offaly. "I enjoyed that very much and I made great friends, many I still have to this day, that fact decided my move to Birr 2 years ago. This is now our Irish base and we do spend part of the year in Spain as well."

She completed her MA 2007 and is working on a PhD at UCC, supervised by Professor Eibhear Walshe. Quite independent of that the Library at UCC has acquired her archive evidencing her papers, drafts, publications and letters have an intrinsic literary value.

Speaking on the issue of Eoghan's light hiding under the bushel of our town Rita is reflective - "I think that we have become so much better at acknowledging and celebrating our poets and writers in their own places. We are happy now to honour them, we are glad to share in their national and international recognition. Our town and our people and our view of the world has informed and shaped a creative force of which we can be very proud. It is also a great source of inspiration for all the young people who are considering an artistic and a creative life - it can be done, it has been done and now there are far more supports in allowing it to be done," urges Rita.

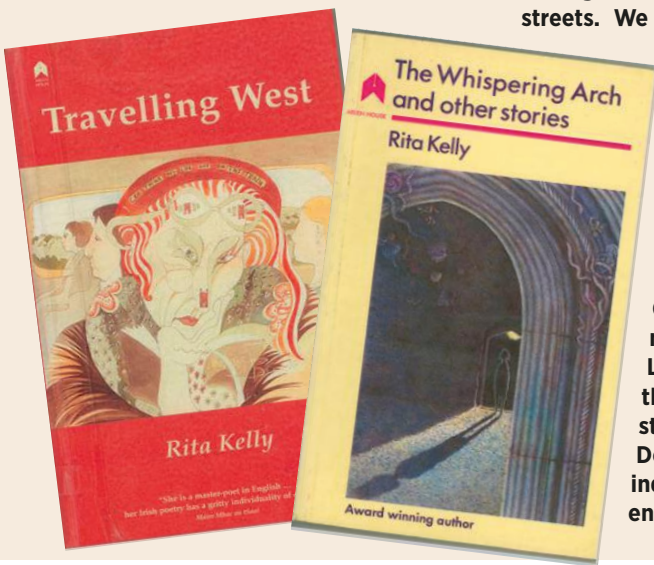
"Ballinasloe has and holds its distinctive character, nowhere else is quite like it. As Eoghan used to say, it's a limestone island in the middle of the bogs. And it is, now the bogs have great cachet, so many European countries would love to have them, because they drained away theirs, now they rather regret it. The limestone is beautiful and famous. It still glitters up and down the generous streets. We are on the western side of the Shannon, but we have more in common with Athlone and Tullamore than we do with Clifden, Tuam or Gort. In many ways it is a gateway, all development of the Suck linking it to the Shannon has been an inspired undertaking. I am amazed too that the Convent and its Chapel is now an absolutely wonderful Library. All the elements of the town and its design are still strong and visually interesting. Despite the reduction of an industrial base, there is a new energy and a renewed self-

confidence. Things are possible now in a way they weren't, say 50 years ago, we are no longer afraid to take on new challenges and to feel proud of that very special place.

"Having the river and its tributaries greatly enriches the town. We no longer turn our back on the river, it is all opened up now and accessible. Hopefully Ballinasloe will become a vibrant hub on the newly planned Greenway - having lived in Waterford, I know how transformative such a development is to an area.

"As the executor of Eoghan's Will, I am also the sole benefactor, hold copyright and production rights to all his work, in both languages. Of course I should be thrilled to see any celebration of Eugene's work and life in Ballinasloe. He was very much a native of the town, he had great time for it always and he had such admiration for all the characters of his youth. In fact many of the same characters were there still in my own time" notes the Poet.

It is wonderfully coincidental that Micheál Ó hAodha's translation of his *An Lomnochtán ('I am Lewy')* will be published this Spring by Bullawn Press, also based in Co Galway. These translations are great because they allow a much wider readership for his Irish works. This work is based on his early childhood in Ballinasloe during the Civil War and its aftermath.



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Local singer Rachel Goode has had quite an eventful start to the year with her career skyrocketing of late.

After initially being based in the UK, the singer moved back here in her early teens to the Birchgrove base of her supportive parents, Caroline and David. Rachel graduated with a first-class honours bachelor Music degree from DIT in 2014. She went on to graduate from the Masters in Opera Performance course at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in July 2018.

Since her beginnings, Rachel has had a love for all genres of music but is most well known for her singing of Irish Folk, Country and Opera. She is no stranger to the stage and has performed in most of the major venues throughout the country as well performing locally with Shows, Musicals and Choirs. She also has a number of accolades to her name including being named Milford Haven Young Opera Singer of the Year in 2019, and later that year she was awarded the Ian Stoutzker prize for most outstanding musician at RWCMD.

The singer is now taking part in the 2022 season of the TG4 show Glór Tíre, a quest to find the best country and western talent in the country. Rachel is representing her mentor Mike Denver on the show. "I have loved and sang country and Irish folk music ever since I was a child. As you all know I am classically trained and I delve into the world of opera, along with doing many gigs where I feature all genres of music but folk is a massive love of mine. I cannot wait to delve into this world of country and folk even more and hopefully this is just the start for me" she said.

Rachel will first feature on the show on February 1. From February 8, the show will go live and she relies on the public vote from then on. To vote you have to download the Glór Tíre app to get your five free votes with any further votes requiring payment.

Her busy schedule doesn't end there as the soprano will also be one of the contenders in the Eurosong Final on The Late Late Show on February 4. If Rachel wins the final she will go on to represent Ireland in Eurovision 2022 in Turin, Italy. Her song 'I'm Loving Me' is one of six entries and the result will be decided 50/50 with a jury and public vote on the night.

Goode said: "I'm slightly stepping out of my comfort zone with a completely different genre than my usuals, this song is very 80s

pop vibes. I was approached by the Swedish songwriters to see would I consider singing their song as they thought my voice and vibe would suit the song really well."

Everyone can get behind Rachel over the next few weeks by voting for her on both shows. "I hope I do the town proud on both shows, I am so extremely grateful for the continued support I always receive here and I am so proud to say I am from Ballinasloe!" she concludes excitedly.



Rachel with Mentor Mike Denver - participant in Glór Tíre Live on Feb 8th



Rachel Goode - Soprano Singer - Eurosong Finalist 2022 - Late Late Show Feb 4th.

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23-year-old Ciaran Murray from Thomastown, Ballydangan became European Junior Powerlifting champion in the city of Vasteras, Sweden just before Christmas. The son of Liz and Joe Murray, Ciaran took the overall gold in the Under 23, Under 66kg category with a total amount lifted of 587.5kg as well as silver medals in the squat and deadlift sections with 217.5kg and 242.5kg (38 stone approx.) respectively, setting national open records for squat and total amount lifted in under 66kg.

The International Powerlifting Federation championships saw Ciaran overcome the challenge of a Russian competitor, who excelled in the bench press section, to take the gold medal. But this was to be Ciaran's final competition in this category because of his age but he cherished his victory in Sweden as his parents and relations watched the event live on YouTube, in Ireland, the UK and Australia.

The University of Limerick student only took up the sport after his older brother, Niall had set up a gym in his father's garage and encouraged him to follow the sport he had picked up while studying in Birmingham. Ciaran went on to represent Ireland on a number of occasions and won a bronze medal at the World Championships, held in Halmstad, Sweden, setting an Irish national record in the process in the squat category.

The former Athlone Community College student said "I was absolutely delighted with my win. It was an incredible experience competing against the best in Europe but now I have to move up to the open class. I suppose in a way I have to thank the Covid for confining me to the training sessions in my dad's garage. I just kept up the training and it has paid off."

Proud father Joe said he had to get a builder to reinforce the floor of the shed where Ciaran was training because of the heavy weights he was using. "I thought he was going to wreck my new shed" laughed Joe.



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Former Ballinasloe Town AFC player Heather Payne received the ultimate accolade in Irish Soccer when she was chosen as the PFA Irish International Senior Ladies' Soccer Player of the Year for her consistently

After the Christmas break activities have now resumed with the youth soccer academy having returned on Wednesday since mid-January and all other youths and adult training sessions now back in action again at the Curragh Grounds.

The senior team's high-profile game in the FAI Junior Cup 5th Round versus Ballyheane has been rescheduled for February 13.

outstanding performances for the International Team.

Within a few days of picking up the very prestigious award at the end of the year, Heather was starring for Florida State University as they claimed the USA Colleges NCAA Women's National Championship title after a dramatic game which was decided on a penalty shoot-out on a 4-3 score line against BYU in Santa Clare in California.

The game had finished 0-0 after extra time and Heather duly stepped up and scored her penalty kick to help secure the USA National Title for Florida State University.

Club Development Co-ordinator, Johnny Walsh stated, "Everyone associated with Ballinasloe Town AFC are extremely proud of Heather and wish her all the very best for the coming year and indeed are looking forward to Heather joining us in a training session when she is next home."

There was further success for the club with three youth players, Fionn Duffy, Adam Lloyd and Adam McLoughlin, who represented the under 12 Galway League Squad in Limerick in an interleague representative game in early January.

The club's committee were delighted to receive financial support with a sum of €2,000 being awarded from the local Credit Union's Social Fund. The funds will go towards the next phase of the club's development works.



L-R: Adam McLoughlin, Fionn Duffy and Adam Lloyd.

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RUGBY CLUB TALENTS CONTINUE TO SHINE

Ballinasloe RFC held their AGM recently where they appointed their new committee members for the year.

In his President's address, Club President Tom Waters remembered Paul Spencer, a staunch member of the club's committee, who passed away during the year. "Paul left an indelible mark on this Club through his years of selfless volunteerism as a coach and various roles on committees and ultimately as Club President in 2005-2006. We as a club will always remember those we have lost and I would now like to pass on mine and the club's condolences to members and friends of Ballinasloe RFC who have lost loved ones in the recent past. May they all rest in peace."

The President also thanked all Club Volunteers, Coaches and Parents for their hard work and enthusiasm throughout the year. "Our great Club continues to punch above its weight and continues to be successful, producing players in both codes, representing the Club at both a Provincial and National level".

The elected committee for the 2022 season is Club President Tom Waters, Vice President/Treasurer Pearse Keller, Hon. Secretary Jacinta Divilly, Assistant Treasurer Matt Carey, Director of Rugby Noel Mannion, Club Welfare Officer Declan Quinn, Communications Officer/PRO Kevin Keane, Youth Branch Delegate Paul Burns, Mini's Co-ordinator Steve Goode. David McKeigue, Ann Conlon, Tom Horkan, Annemarie McCann, John McKenna, Tom Finn and Liam Feehily.

There was good news recently for two of the club's products, as good friends Shane Jennings and Oisin McCormack, who have played with each other from an early age, both signed professional contracts with Connacht. The men who have been part of the Connacht academy for a few years, will now join the first-team squad for the 2022/23 season.



Beibhinn Parsons

The club's finest ladies export, Beibhinn Parsons, has been making waves on the international scene yet again. Beibhinn's fine 2021 year culminated in her being named the Guinness Rugby Writers of Ireland Women's Player of the Year for the second year running. This incredible achievement for the Connacht and Ireland flyer comes off the back of some immense performances during the recent season.

Parsons once again has proved herself to be one of the stars of the Ireland Women's squad, capable of scoring amazing tries and digging deep when needed.

At the time of publication, Beibhinn is currently in Malaga, Spain representing Ireland in the HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series where she hopes to add a title to her already glistening CV.

By Robbie Gately

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The Ballinasloe Lions are a newly formed field hockey club, starting up for boys and girls from ages eight all the way up to senior. Started by Jennifer Hyde from Aughrim, a star hockey player with Connacht Hockey and a coach for the Connacht U23's, she is the first female head coach to make it to the U23's Interpro final with a Connacht team.

Senator Aisling Dolan stated: "It is fantastic to see a new sports club opening up in Ballinasloe and to promote hockey, a sport of real speed and skill. Why not bring the family to check it out especially when we have a champion with Connacht in our midst?"

Jennifer Hyde expressed her excitement for the project. "I love playing hockey and now I'm competing at a national level with Connacht. Hockey is a fantastic sport and I really feel that children in the area would love to try out this new sport. Playing hockey, I've developed great friendships, a great way to stay fit and I've had such great experiences when I moved abroad by joining a hockey club. And like all sports, it also gives a real sense of purpose when you have regular training. Fitness and friendship are great reasons to join and all ages are welcome."

The club is looking for new junior players, adults and club officials for the 2022 season. There will be a taster session on Saturday, February 5 at the soccer club's Astro pitches in Brackernagh at 11.00 am. All participants are welcome, and no prior hockey knowledge is required.

Hockey Sticks will be made available from the club, which are free to use on the day, all that is needed from players is to bring their mouth guard and

shin guards with them to participate. A €10 admin fee is also required.

Players can express their interest by registering on the form on the club's website ballinasloelionshockeyclub.com or e-mail the club to request to be added to the list of participants admin@ballinasloelionshockeyclub.com.

Check out the Facebook and Instagram pages at [@ballinasloelionshockeyclub](https://www.facebook.com/ballinasloelionshockeyclub) for further updates.



Jennifer Hyde and Aisling Dolan



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Ballinasloe & District Tennis Club are currently undergoing a development of their facilities with the hopes of providing a top-quality sports facility for its members and the town.

The club currently accommodates over 120 members of all age groups and also provides free access to local residents, disadvantaged and special needs groups. It has proven to be a valuable asset to the community and hopes to do so for many years to come.

The first phase of the plan has already been completed which included two tarmac courts and other necessary groundwork. The next phase of the development plan is to erect new floodlights and open a third court. In the near future, it's hoped to provide more essential facilities including all weather surfaces, clubhouses and toilet facilities. The long-term plan is a multi-purpose indoor community and sports centre to accommodate the ever-growing amount of members.

The club has arranged and run numerous fundraising events in the hopes of gathering funds for the development. A junior player of the club, Josh Judge organised two Doubles and Singles tournaments which were a great success, with players donating refreshments for the day.

A fundraising 'Spooktacular Halloween Party' was held at the Emerald Ballroom in late October. Over €3,000 was raised through Christmas Raffle Competitions to promote shopping local in Ballinasloe. An in-house tennis doubles competition was arranged in aid of St. Vincent de Paul, in early January 2022, over €350 was raised in aid of charity.

However, although everyone has been working diligently fundraising for several years now, they are still falling considerably short of the costs for its development. They are appealing to the community for help. The club has set up the 'Ballinasloe & District Tennis Club Fundraiser' Go Fund Me page where donations can be made online. A member

of the club's committee Triona Larkin noted that "every little helps."

New members of all standards are always welcome to join. On Sunday mornings at 10 am beginners' tennis takes place. Racquets are supplied and if interested contact Joe on (087) 252 1424.



Congratulations to Thomas Brennan son of Barry & Jackie Brenann, formerly of Ballinasloe, winner of the National Senior Men's Indoor Tennis championship last January.

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The Golf Club successfully conducted the Ladies, Gents and Parent Club AGMs recently, welcoming incoming President Mattie Curley, Ladies' Captain Peggy Wong, Junior Ladies' Captain Rebecca Bleahan, Men's Captain Mick O'Hehir, and Junior Men's Captain Tom Cafferky.

Board member Barry O'Keefe thanked their former officials who served for two years over the Covid period: "We would like to thank Anne Greene, John Hurley Snr and John Hurley Jnr for their time and commitment to the club." There was also great acknowledgment for May and Dermot O'Mahony and Joe Moore. They were awarded Honorary Life Memberships, in recognition of exceptional service to the club.

Members continue to benefit and enjoy the course thanks to the work of the tremendous greens' staff, with the mild weather ensuring that they had an active Christmas period on the course culminating with a successful Christmas gathering event.

The introduction of pathways for golf buggies has been a great success and work will commence shortly to extend this benefit to the lower part of the course. This will mean that all 18 holes will then be accessible to persons using golf buggies.

What a start to the golfing year it has been for Denis Minton. Denis commenced 2022 in fine fashion by recording the first hole-in-one of the year on the par 3 10th hole.

Society bookings for the coming year are busy and all organisers should book early to secure their preferred dates. Planning for this year's Festival of Golf is underway and the club hope to build on the success of last year's event where they had the opportunity to welcome many visitors to the course.

The club is awaiting news from Golf Ireland regarding this year's Inter-Club competitions. The ladies, junior and men's teams will learn their opponents in the various competitions and another successful year is anticipated.

Meadow & Green continues to excel from a culinary perspective at the club. The regular Friday Folk Music Sessions and attractive weekend lunch offerings have seen many returning visitors, golfers and non-golfers, to the renovated clubhouse. The ever-popular Date Night is back and the team should have a busy schedule especially as we head towards Valentine's Day.

New members are always encouraged to join and if you are interested in joining the golf club, phone the office on (090) 964 2126 or email ballinasloegolfclub@hotmail.com to talk through options for beginners, improvers and returning members.



Denis Minton who hit a hole-in-one

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Ballinasloe GAA Club held their AGM and coinciding with health guidelines, the meeting was held online and was well attended under the circumstances.

2021 was again a difficult year for the club due to Covid restrictions. However once action got underway in April, it was all systems go. The biggest success of the year was the establishment of the joint Hurling/Football/Camogie nursery which took place on Saturday mornings and the Cúl camps during the summer, both of which had record numbers participating.

On the playing fields, the Junior Ladies success in winning the County Championship, after losing the previous three finals, was highlighted as were a number of other teams who reached finals in their particular codes. Tributes were paid to all coaches and volunteers without whom the Club could not operate.

The Officers appointed at the AGM were Chairperson Paul Madden, Vice-chair Damian Friel, Secretary Stephen Kerr, Asst Sec & Registrar Gerry Seale, Treasurer Mark Ward, Asst Treasurer Charlene Hurley, PRO Damien Clarke.

The Club is now gearing up for the 2022 season and are hopeful that it will be as close to a normal year as possible. On-field activities will commence from the end of February and all information

relating to training schedules, age groups, contact information etc will be posted on their social media page on Facebook Ballinasloe GAA and on the club website www.ballinasloe.gaa.ie

The Junior Ladies team were presented with a full set of new gear by Billy King owner of Billy King Pharmacy. The ladies will set into the upcoming season in their fresh new gear.



Left to right: Aisling Brannley, Paul Madden, Billy King, John Mitchell, Lisa O'Neill, Niamh Loughnane, Stephen Kerr and Niall Cunningham.

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The old Irish proverb: *Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine* – we live in each others' shadows – best epitomises the beating heart of Padraig Pearse's club. The collaboration of a community to attain a greater good has been central to all progress and development since the club's foundation in 1962.

Finneran's in Taughmaconnell, Greene's in Moore and Donnellan's in Creagh were the sportsfields of that era. Each parish had its own tradition of participation in Gaelic games going back to the early 1900's. The visionaries of 1962 saw the need for the parishes to unite as one club, Padraig Pearses.

The fledgling club reached senior county football titles in the 1960's and the players and mentors of that era inspired the subsequent generations. While the club had won senior hurling titles, all underage county titles in all codes and had reached All-Ireland finals in Féile and Scór, the Holy Grail of a county senior football title was not achieved until 2019. The unleashing of joy on that day washed away the years of frustration, disappointment, hurt and soul searching – *an rud is annamh is iontach!* Through all the years of disappointment the red and white flag was never discarded, just neatly folded away to be unfurled again for the following year's attempt at glory.

Much energy was expended in the late '70's and early '80's in the development of the fine facilities in Cloneen. The facilities were developed in recessionary times with the goodwill and financial support of a community intent on providing a modern cultural hub for future generations. At the opening of the grounds in May 1984, Liam Mulvihill, then Director General of the GAA said: 'It would be difficult for any rural club to equal what has been achieved by the Pearse's club. Its officials are exceedingly young and probably the youngest group of officials I have met'.

So to what avail such efforts and foresight? Patrick Pearse himself asked, *O wise men riddle me this; what if the dream come true?* The dream has come true for the current crop of senior footballers and their management team. They are now kings of Connacht. The seat of power for the kings of old may have been Rathcroghan, north Roscommon, but for now the crown sits at Cloneen in the heart of Padraig Pearses community.

Since 1962 each decade has produced its own tireless and dedicated crop of officers, players, mentors and supporters. We reflect gratefully on the women

and men who kept Patrick Pearse's *claidheamh solais* or sword of light aflame through lean and fallow times. That sword of light is emblazoned on the club crest with the motto, *Ní neart go cur le chéile* – there is no strength without unity. There are many who have left us who one would wish were here to witness the recent successes. Some recent, bereavements in particular those of Tom Buckley, Paul Flynn and Paddy Seale were a cause of great sadness in the club environs as they were the embodiment of the total devotion to the club shown by so many over the years. *Leaba na bhflaitheas dóibh.* Many other club stalwarts have gone to their reward. They are gone, but not forgotten. Their memory and devotion to the club are recalled at every gathering and success. Their work was never for personal glory or praise. *Molann an obair an duine!*



Captian Emmet Kelly with his wife Sarah and son at the post Final Celebrations

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Back row (Left to Right): Tom Butler, Conor Lohan, David Donnellan Ronan Daly, Niall Carty, Thomas Richardson, Niall Daly, Aaron Feehily, Mark Richardson, Shane Carty, Caelim Keogh, Emmet Kelly (Joint Captain), Declan Kenny, Eoin Colleran, Conor Daly, Shane Mulvey, Anthony Butler.

Front Row (Left to Right): Jack Tumulty, Gavin Downey, Seán Ryan, James Kelly, Paul Carey, Lorcán Daly, David Murray (Joint Captain), Paul Whelan, Hubert Darcy, Conor Payne, Matthew Feehily, Jack Downey, Seán Fahy, Daniel Farrell.

AND AS WE GO TO PRINT FROM THE SENIOR SQUAD CAMP

According to Club Secretary Aaron Clogher, the recent success has been a long time coming: "It's all come from work that's been done over a long number of years at underage level to build this particular group of players up to where they are today, it hasn't been an overnight success at all. We've had underage success for the last decade and more that has been building towards this all that work is coming to fruition now."

Now into an All-Ireland senior club semi-final for the first time in the club's history, where they take on take on Dublin and Leinster champions Kilmacud-Crokes, Emmet Kelly joint captain said the team are relishing the challenge: "We were all back training the Wednesday after the Knockmore game and the group seem ready. Everyone is excited about it; the whole community and area are excited about it. We're playing one of the biggest clubs in the country, membership wise they're a big name so for us to be there playing against them is a great achievement."

Manager Pat Flanagan, too is now entering uncharted territory in the club game, but he believes his side are ready. "Everyone is totally focused on what's required, it's all systems go to try and be the best we can on the day. It's going to be a huge challenge taking on a very good Dublin team. It's a great experience for us and one we shouldn't fear, one we should look forward to. This team knows how to win if we can keep our feet on the ground and work as hard as we possibly can it will give us a great opportunity to succeed again."

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Heroic feats were recalled through South Roscommon and East Galway following the death of the legendary **John Flannery** of Falty, Moore.

One of the parish's greatest athletes, John's career started over sixty years ago under the guidance of the late John Joe Grenham and for more than thirty years he proudly wore the blue and gold singlet of Moore AC at venues all over Ireland as well as in the Isle of Man.

There were many runners from Moore but All-Ireland winner John Flannery epitomised what it meant to him to represent his parish. He was a superb athlete who ran as an individual and as a team, often leading his side to victory. John was not afraid of competition and took on the best including the lion-hearted Willie Morris and Tommy Madden of Derrydonnell and Sean McDonagh from the Eire Og club. Despite a shortage of transport in the fifties, Flannery ran at venues all over Ireland including Tullamore, Hollymount, Ardee, Santry, Elphin and Claremorris where he amassed an array of trophies.

In 1954 he won an All-Ireland medal in 4-mile race and in 1956 he took the 6-mile title. He won the Quinlan Cup for Veterans in Tullamore in 1972 & 1973, at the aged of 40 years, and also competed in the famous Guinness Sports at the Iveagh Grounds in Crumlin, Dublin.

At the age of 50 years, John ran the Dublin Marathon in 1982 and recorded a very respectable time.

He took part internationally in the Isle of Man half marathon in early 1980's. It was on a terrible windy day, he would recall, when telling the story.

He loved history and the plight of Daniel Mathers, Landlord of Falty. His father was a steward for the landlord. He heard his father recount visiting the Dublin Agricultural Show with Mathers' prize horses and cattle and bringing home the cups. John lived next door to the Landlord's House.

He was a self-taught swimmer, able to swim the River Shannon and often dived off the bridge in Shannonbridge, a place he loved to fish and tour in his row-boat.

An avid farmer, John, who was 89, bought his first Fordson Major, a blue tractor in 1954, and was able to repair it and rebuild an engine. He loved the Threshing machines and travelled to all the local villages with the Threshing Mill. This usually brought great excitement to the area and a day off school for the boys. He was a member of the Midland & Western Vintage Club and attended the enactment of many a Threshing around the country.

John Flannery is survived by his brother P.J. and sister Bridget as well as nieces, nephews and many relatives, neighbours and friends. He was laid to rest in Moore New Cemetery.



John Flannery in action on the track

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£402 TO STAGE A CARNIVAL WEEK

It cost just over £402 to stage the 1959 Fair Week Carnival in Ballinasloe, according to the accounts published. The biggest income was £189 which was the proceeds of dance in the Town Hall where one of Ireland's top bands of the time, Donie Collins charged £35.

The traders of the town subscribed £60 while sale of ballot papers to elect a King of the Fair realised £145. 35,000 ballot papers were printed with many firms putting up candidates for the title. After a hectic election campaign the Burnhouse nominee, the late Gerry Kelly was crowned King for the week. His escort queen was the late Irene O'Grady (nee Gannon), a secondary school pupil.

Costumes for the week were hired out from P.J. Bourke in Dublin, at a cost of £29,



Gerry Kelly and Irene O'Grady, King and Queen of the Fair 1959

Insurance cost £4.10.0 while Entertainment Stamps meant an outlay of £32.10.0. The balance sheet reveals that there was an excess of Expenditure over Income to the tune of £13.8.10. However the Assets exceeded the Liabilities by £7.16.2.

The main organisers of the Fair Week Carnival that year were Michael J. Ryan, Tadhg Mac Lochlainn, Martin Greally and Oliver O'Grady.

SNOOKER CLUB HUGE YOUTH DRIVE

By Robert Gately

The local Snooker Club, on Society St., have been very active over the past few weeks – offering free trials and coaching to our communities' youngsters between the ages of 7 and 17.

The club held a junior coaching session which was conducted by qualified snooker coach Paul Keighery, with the assistance of committee members. A magnificent crowd turned out with some very advanced players turning up and a large number of eager beginners.

There was recent success for Adrian O'Rourke who captured his maiden Galway title by winning a closely fought final 3-2. The "Loughrea Lightning" made a fine 40 break in the deciding frame and sealed the win by potting the yellow and green to win the Clarinbridge Cup.

The final junior coaching session takes place on February 4, from 6pm to 8pm in the Social Club, Society Street. For more information contact Secretary Joby Kelly on (087) 631 7817.

The club is also open Monday to Friday from 5pm (for non-members) for anyone who wishes to come in and avail of the facilities to see if they would like to join in the future.

You just have to pay for the lights which is €2 for 30 minutes of play. A club steward will



Some of the Committee and Officers of the Snooker Club

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50 years ago this January 7th saw the death of one of the town's most cultural important characters-that of Lavina Sheridan or "Breezie" as she was more colloquially known.

Since her arrival to the town in 1924 until the early sixties as organist to St. Michael's and Professor of Music at Garbally College - there was not a note or quaver sounded that did not have her imprimatur or legacy.

As well as her Church and College duties, she was a professional music teacher of both piano and violin - generations of middle aged and not so, around these parts owe their grounding in musicianship and singing to her !

As if that wasn't enough, she also along with others, formed the basis for Christmastime and Annual live Musical Performance traditions that have been sadly lacking these past 24 months.

In 1923, together with five others, she produced the first opera ever in the Town Hall. As well as producing and being musical director, she also painted the scenery for this first presentation, "Trial by Jury." Then, in 1925, she staged "The Mikado" in the local Town Hall, and in 1927 produced the first opera, "H.M.S. Pinafore" in St. Joseph's College, where she was the musical director until 1960.

She was one of nine children born to William and Mary (nee Armstrong) in Ellison Street, Castlebar, and was a relation of Margaret Bourke-Sheridan. Her father was a commercial traveller for William Hogg Co Ltd.

Damin Mac Con Uladh researched that she was in boarding school in Sligo with his great-grandmother's sister. His great-grandmother was from Fohenagh, Caltra-a Cahill lady. Their names appear next to one another on the census.

"In 1901, she and her sister were boarders at the Ursuline College, Sligo. Mamie is no 57 on the form and "Breezie" is no 58. It's important to note that she was "Breezie" then, so all the Ballinasloe folklore about how she got her name locally erroneous. She was known as "Breezie" as a 12-year-old girl" reports Damian.

No 55 on the form is Marion Cahill. She was a grandaunt of Michael McCullagh. Her brother AD Cahill had a business on Society Street, so the working assumption is that there may have been some link between Marian and the Sheridans and that may have led "Breezie" to Ballinasloe in the first place.

Damian's father, in his memoirs, recalls being a pupil of her Dunlo Hill Conservatoire (where the late Pakie Clarke's house was) at 11 years of age and being requested to attend the Choir to attend the bellows of the wind organ in St. Michael's where allegedly in seeking more oomph for the drone and notes she would shout "more wind more wind !".

Lavina spent time teaching music in Germany and Portugal before moving back to London after the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. She worked as a musical instructress to the children of a German Baron in Frankfort on Main.

On the death of her father in 1918, she returned to Ireland and secured a position with the Diocese of Clonfert to teach music in Garbally.

In 1960 she won the trophy for the best musical director at the Waterford Musical Festival with the Ballinasloe Group's presentation of "Oklahoma"



THE DEAD MUSIC

(for Lavinia Sheridan)

Back from the City of Stones,
crossing the river
into Main Street, mist and
gasolene,
dumb Sunday windows setting
the winterscene:
we enter again into the confusion
of living.

Grey town, grey sky,
the Lazy Wall, the antique Market
Square,
and the remote beauty of a
Gothic Spire
in the long melancholy of the
smouldering air.

One wanders in, as to a tomb,
no flowers, no ghosts, a
well-swept sepulchre,
no Michael now twirling his skirt
like a dancer
above the coils of the Confusion.

Lady, here your past is petrified.
A shell,
silent, the stone vibrates with the
memory

as if one fingering it might feel
the long procession of the
harmonies

spirit to spirit relaying the
requiems,
the ideal passions and the
Bethlehems
of Rome, Athens, Vienna,
Heidelberg
to our town in the turfbogs

till angel fingers aged.
Now the mind, the music-and the
discipline
have petered out like a Sunday
evening
under the miserable mystery of
the rain -

Out. Out. Where human lamps are
lighting
in little windows watching the
night
one sets the word in earth again as
epitaph
to the Artist, with love.

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(the Late Liam Kelly, Church St, Johnny Furey and Joe Hill, were all involved). In 1970 she was honoured with the Bene Morenti Medal which was given to her by Pope Paul V and presented to her at a special function in her honour in St. Joseph's College

Even though we only see her as an Organist, teacher and Conductress, Breezie was a multi-instrumentalist. A niece Rowena Kilkelly's memories are mainly of her playing the piano at family gatherings, but there are archival accounts of concerts at which Breezy sang or played the violin or harp.

In 1911, the *Connacht Telegraph* on the 4th of Feb, reports "Breezie" sang the rallying song of the Gaelic League and later played the piano at a concert in aid of the Mayo County Infirmary. In 1914, she performed at a fundraiser in Castlebar for the local branch of the National Volunteers: "Miss Lavinia Sheridan, The Marsh, gave further proof of her claims to be an accomplished instrumentalist by the exquisite manner in which she rendered a charming violin solo" (*Connacht Telegraph*, 3 October 1914).

Past Pupil Oliver Whyte (Retired GP Wesport) recalls "Lavinia was a prominent person in Garbally during my term (1957 to 1962). She auditioned all new entrants to the College. She informed me that my voice was breaking, and to come back the next year. She definitely was a treasure. My voice never improved".

Corkonian Gerry Keating in his late 80s, who was an accountant in Paddy Lamb's factory took part in the Student Prince in 1957 remembers her forming his raw vocal talent "When I had finished a serenade 'Overhead the moon' she pointed to me with her baton and said you are a diamond and I shaped you'. Within 2 weeks of the show, my job in Lynch's Abatoir finished but Breezie gave him a room for a few weeks before I left town" states Gerry.

Breezie in the Organ Loft

i.m. Lavinia 'Breezie' Sheridan (1888-1972)

By Rachel McNicholl (Grand Niece)

I often wonder how her feet
reached the pedal board below.
Perched aloft, she commanded the chorister,
Breeze, please - more breeze!
and the bellows wheezed while fugues floated
out of pipes and into the airy Pugin spaces
of St Michael's, Ballinasloe.

In her console mirror, 'Breezie' Sheridan
kept a quick eye on the priest, the congregation,
the Harry Clarke windows.
Between hymns, her mind strayed
to the Choral and Orchestral Society's Mikado,
to the Castlebar of her youth,
to Braga and Frankfurt-am-Main,
where she had taught young countesses music and
English
before the Great War broke out.

While her fingers played familiar notes,
the Sunday roast
sat like a semibreve
on the horizon
a few sherry quavers before,
a brandy rest after.



When I was a girl, this grand-aunt was the only woman
I knew
who went to a pub on her own,
perhaps to pick up a naggin or two,
and I liked to picture her propped on a high stool
or sipping her tippie
in a tidy snug.

Long after she was dead and I had fallen in love with
language,
I read that Lavinia, in London, had translated for the
Service.

After 1918, in the Diocese of Clonfert,
Miss Sheridan was more Breezie and less Lavinia.

Tiny and stout, brusque at times
but mostly cheery, she taught generations of Garbally
boys,
directed dozens of musicals,
conducted decades of choirs,
led thousands of hymns.
There was talk of naming a roundabout after her.

She lived alone - though not for want of suitors,
I am told - and there was clearly more to her
than met the eye.
No organ was too tall for her,
no loft too lofty.
I loved her kinetic energy and the jut of her chin.
She rests in Creagh under a treble clef.

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When Ballinasloe Urban District Council decided to rebrand Victoria Street in the 1940s they opted for Duggan Avenue, a name recalling a 19th-century Bishop of Clonfert noted for his support of the Land League, and who had been chosen as the first patron of the GAA, an honour he was obliged to forgo because of ill-health in favour of Archbishop Croke. However, a local sportsfield already bore Duggan's name, and his association with the town was at best peripheral. His immediate predecessor, it could be argued, had a superior claim to be commemorated since he had spent his boyhood just around the corner in Dunlo Street and was the only Ballinasloe man ever to become a Roman Catholic bishop.

Reportedly a relative of Patrick Fallon, Bishop of Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora from 1852 to 1866, John Derry was born in the parish of Moore on 19th June 1811 and brought up in his father's public house opposite Bruton's yard, which towards the end of the century became the site of the Presbytery. At the time, varying in quality, there were seven private schools in Ballinasloe. Young Derry attended the academy run by John O'Farrell, regarded as being at the top of the scale and charging fees of seven shillings per quarter. The school catered for both Catholic and Protestant pupils. Its curriculum included reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, Latin and Greek.

Bishop Thomas Coen, coadjutor to Bishop Costello, sent Derry at a comparatively early age to study for the priesthood at Maynooth, where he distinguished himself in philosophy, science, theology and scriptural studies. Ordained in 1834, he served for three years as second junior dean, a position he was obliged to relinquish as a result of his intemperate response to a student's complaint about the quality of meat served at table in the college refectory.

Subsequently he was appointed parish priest of the united parishes of Ballymacward and Gurteen, and while there he became embroiled in the decades-long Clancarty estate schools controversy, about which I wrote at some length in a previous article. In 1844 he advised his parishioners to withdraw their children from the Earl's school. His action prompted a riposte by Lord Clancarty in the form of a letter to the local schoolmaster:

"I do not wish my tenants to be swayed by any other motive than their sense of duty to their children, and of the value of the education offered to them, in the course they may adopt in respect of the school. If, however, they prefer acting as advised or rather commanded by Mr. Derry to shake off all obligation to their landlord by paying him their lawful contract, I shall certainly regret the motive with which the advice is given and accepted, although in a pecuniary way I shall be the gainer, as I believe many to whom this advice was addressed have the accommodation of holding in hand the hanging gale of rent."

Following Bishop Coen's death on 27th April 1847 the diocesan clergy submitted the name of Dr. Robert French Whitehead, a native of Creagh and vice-president of Maynooth College, as their preferred candidate to succeed Coen. Rome's choice, however, was John Derry, who was consecrated as Bishop of Clonfert on 21st September 1847.

In 19th-century Ireland the influence of a Catholic prelate could prove so decisive in determining the outcome of an electoral contest that political aspirants often found it expedient to court the favour of



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the local bishop. Thus, when William Gregory of Coole, future husband of Lady Augusta Gregory of Abbey Theatre fame, planned a return to Parliament in 1852 he sought Derry's endorsement. He received a chilling rebuff. "It would require indeed a very thorough renunciation of hereditary prejudices and a total renunciation of influential family ties to qualify Mr. Gregory as a candidate for the Catholic party," remarked the Bishop, who went on to point out that not only was Gregory connected to the proselytizing Clancarty family but he was identified as the author of the infamous clause in the Poor Relief Act whereby the occupier of a quarter acre of land was required to surrender his holding to qualify his family for outdoor relief. Derry then went on to specify terms for Catholic electoral support which he must have known that Gregory could not meet.

By the time Gregory returned to face the electorate five years later he had at last won the respect of the Bishop who had found him both helpful in securing copies of proposed legislation and responsive in his concern for the spiritual welfare of Catholics. A peculiar grievance was the practice of raising children in the workhouse as members of the Church of Ireland whenever the religion of their

parents had not been conclusively established. So, in March 1859, Gregory had introduced a bill to amend the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act seeking to restrict the discretionary power of the Poor Law Guardians to those cases where there was no clue to the parents' religion. A child found with a rosary around its neck, for example, would be registered and educated as a Catholic. Derry expressed himself as thoroughly convinced of Gregory's desire to act with the utmost fairness and handsomely acknowledged that he had misjudged him during the previous election. Moreover, he made known his wish to see him re-elected as a representative of County Galway.

Bishop Derry is probably best remembered for his church-building

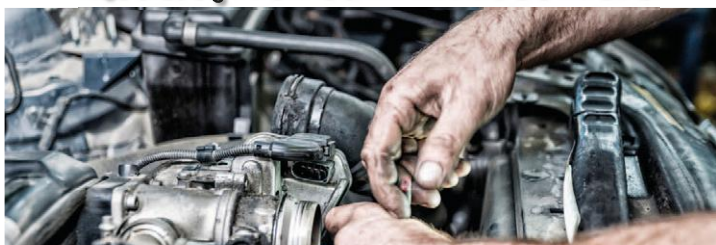
programme that included Ballinasloe's St. Michael's, an outstanding example of neo-Gothic architecture. He was instrumental in persuading Cardinal Wiseman, head of the English hierarchy, to preside at its consecration in 1858. Two years earlier Ballinasloe had become a mensal parish and the Chapter of Canons was abolished. Initially invited by the Bishop to establish themselves in Loughrea, the Mercy nuns set up a second convent in Ballinasloe in 1853. When they first came to town they occupied a building in Main Street opposite the Earl of Clancarty's townhouse (now the Bank of Ireland). Over the following century the Sisters made a significant contribution to both primary and secondary education in the locality.

Though suffering from a serious heart ailment, Bishop Derry travelled to Rome to attend the First Vatican Council in November 1869. On his return he stopped over in Dublin to be treated by Sir Dominic Corrigan, an eminent cardiologist. His condition unfortunately did not improve and he died at his sister's residence in Brideswell on 2nd July 1870.

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A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

A lover of the outdoor life, **Thomas (Sonney) Rigney** of Poolboy passed away suddenly after a short illness. The jovial and popular Sonney had spent almost fifty years as a shoe operative in Dubarry, having gone to work straight after finishing school.

Born on 31st December 1933, he was the third child born to Agnes and Thomas Rigney and is the last surviving member having been predeceased by May, Jacky and Kathleen. His late uncles, Pat and Willie were expert stone masons and worked on the construction of both Mullingar and Galway Cathedrals and St Brigid's Hospital.

A man for all seasons, Sonney loved the outdoor life and after his retirement in 1998 he fulfilled a lifelong dream and bought a boat where he and his family made many memorable trips up and down the Suck and the Shannon. In the summer he loved working in the bog and in recent years made many a trip in his trusty tractor to enjoy the fresh air and admire the natural habitats in the Poolboy peatlands.

In the sixties, Sonney and many of his pals packed into a car and toured the dancing scenes at marquees and ballrooms around the country. At a dance in Laurel Park in Bray, in 1965, Sonney met Ita Mc Loughlin from North County Dublin and three years later



they married and settled in Ballinasloe, where they were later blessed with four children.

A committed family man, Sonney Rigney loved his seven grandchildren, where he was fondly called Dan-Dan. He and Ita always enjoyed the Sunday afternoon drives, where there was always a "pit-stop" for a cuppa or an ice-cream.

An unfortunate accident in Barcelona meant that Sonney couldn't fly and with the help of his family was brought back to his home in Poolboy before being admitted to Portiuncula, where he passed away a week later surrounded by his wife and children.

Truly one of life's gentlemen, who seldom raised his voice and was a fountain of knowledge on his town and locality, Sonney is survived by his wife Ita, daughters Michelle, Anita and Nuala, son Ollie and a large number of relatives and friends.

PADDY SEALE A DUAL CO. SUPPORTER



Born in 1947, **Paddy Seale** grew up between his home house in Brackernagh and his grandparents' house in Kellysgrove, attending Ballinasloe National School and Garbally College.

Paddy was a proud Galway man, something we tend to forget, given his huge commitment to Padraig Peareses and Roscommon GAA. From a young age he showed his ability to turn his hand to anything. He worked in his uncle's shop, Timmy Divilly's in Brackernagh and was also a skilled barman.

After training as a psychiatric nurse he began his career in St Brigid's in 1968 and worked there up to retirement in 2002. As well as carrying out his nursing duties, he worked in the Administrations Office where his organisational skills were highly valued. He also worked as recreation officer and was hugely influential in keeping patients in regular contact with their families

An active member of Fianna Fail from an early age, he was secretary of the local Cumann for many years. He was a man for the doorstep, the conversation, the connection and he loved the buzz of the election, the polling stations and tallies. Whether he canvassed with you or against you, the end of the day saw a pint and a chat.

After his family one of Paddy's great loves was Padraig Peareses GAA, serving as treasurer and chairman for lengthy spells from his involvement in the 80's. He was very involved in the setting up of the clubhouse and pitches and was hugely proud of the club. Even when not an officer he worked tirelessly to promote all codes and develop the club to what it is today. He was immensely proud of the achievements of the club on the field in recent years. When asked by a passing member why he was still involved, he looked proudly

around the pitches filled with young people training and said "That's Why".

Paddy lived the fullest of lives. He was a most engaging conversationalist and could command an audience. He was one of life's true gentlemen

Paddy Seale, Woodmount, Ballinasloe, Co Roscommon passed away on 22nd December 2021. To his his wife Mary (nee Kilkenny), five children: Valerie Seale (Aughrim), Aisling O'Sullivan (Woodmount), Oisin Seale (Woodmount), Sinead Madden (Fohenagh) and Tomas Seale (Leixlip); his twelve grandchildren, sister Eileen Kelly (Taughmaconnell), brother Gerry Seale (Brackernagh), we extend our sympathies.

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With the passing of **Irene O'Grady (nee Gannon)** of Mackney, Ballinasloe has lost "a very independent, intelligent person who would weigh up situations and would always act in the best interest of the people who relied on her."

Born in Gibbstown, Co. Meath, to Ambrose and Brigid Gannon, Irene spent her early childhood in Aughtrim before moving to Mackney. She attended the local Secondary School before finishing her education in Taylor's Hill, Galway. Irene spent most of her working life in Portiuncula Hospital on the clerical staff where she was held in the highest esteem by her peers before retiring in 1996.

In 1959, while in Secondary School, she was selected as Queen of the Fair to escort the elected King, the late Gerry Kelly, who was the Burnhouse nominee and was awarded the title as a result of a public ballot. Later on Irene was very much involved with the Poolboy anti-dump protests and lent her presence at demonstrations when required.

Irene O'Grady passed away in the presence of her family on 7th December. Her family life was recalled at her funeral mass where she was praised as a loving mother and grandmother



as well an accomplished landscape artist, an innate perfectionist and talented housekeeper. She encouraged her family on every one of their adventures and often accompanied them on trips to Asia and the Far East.

The popular Meath-born lady is predeceased by her parents and brother Dermot. She is survived

by her husband Michael, son Rory and partner Aisling, daughter Gillian and partner Paul, sister Lillian and brother Noel, her grandchildren Callan, Ella and Finn and many other relatives neighbours and friends.

RAY McLOUGHLIN-A RUGBY LEGEND

Born in Derrymullen, 82 years ago, **Ray McLoughlin** was the eldest in a family of five born to Tadhg Mac Lochlainn and Mel Kelly. He won a county minor football medal playing with Ballinasloe in 1954 and a year later won a county hurling medal, before embarking on a rugby career that catapulted him into international stardom.

It was only in his final year in Garbally College that Ray took up rugby under the guidance of Fr. Christy Glynn. He already had established himself as an outstanding shot putt and discus thrower under coach Fr. Kevin Ryle, which saw him later compete in the international student games.

Firstly with Ballinasloe rugby team, Ray then went on to play for Athlone, UCD, Blackrock College, Gosforth and London-Irish in the UK. The burly prop played 40 times for Ireland, was captain eight times, became the first Connacht man to play with the Lions against New Zealand in 1966 and again toured with the Lions in 1971. He was also a member of the famous Barbarians team in 1973.

A man credited with transforming the game with new ideas, Ray McLoughlin has been acknowledged as one of Ireland's greatest rugby players and captain. He was really delighted in the 60's when his classmate, P.J. O'Dwyer, originally from Duniry, was his teammate as the other prop on the Irish international team. And later, Ray saw his younger brother, Feidlim, in the front row of the national side. Two brothers, playing rugby together for Ireland was a proud moment for the Ballinasloe lads and their families.

Ray's loyalty to his home town was evident when he led a star-studded team to take on the great Willie John McBride's side to mark the opening of the Ballinasloe Rugby Grounds' Clubhouse at Graigueawoneen in the 1970's. Both sides contained a number of current international players, which attracted a bumper attendance.

Raymond John McLoughlin, as he was formally known, entered the business world,



working for the IDA, James Crean & Co., Gaisce, AIB, Asahi Ireland, etc. where he was held in the highest esteem. He also helped the Irish overseas, assisting another former classmate, Fr. Bobby Gilmore, who spoke eloquently at Ray's funeral mass of his contribution to overseas emigrants.

Predeceased by his wife Geraldine and sister Enda, Ray is survived by his family Lynn, Karen, Jennifer and John as well as brothers Feidlim and Colm (Dubai), sister Muire, grandchildren and many other relatives and friends.

SEAN KENNY



Sean Kenny was born and reared in Beagh, Creagh, Ballinasloe. He was educated in Garbally College, joining AT Cross Ltd in the early 1990's and worked in a number of departments before coming to the Finance Department. Shortly after moving to Finance he started to study for his accountancy examinations and qualified as CIMA.

His talent was obvious. He was our Cost Accountant and also responsible for all our main Financial data bases. Very talented and intelligent. He was a key player in the Company before it closed.

Following the closure of Cross Sean joined us in the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre. We teamed up together

with a number of start-up businesses and projects, 2PM Technologies Ltd, Europharma Ltd, Manders Ltd to mention but a few. Sean branched out on his own and built a fine portfolio of clients. He was a true professional.

His passing at a young age on the 4th of January will be a great loss to his wife Angela, his children Jason and Hazel and the wider Kenny family. He will also be sorely missed by all his business associates and clients

"Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam"
John Power



The business and wider community was shocked to learn of the sudden passing of friend, colleague and notable Accountant George Coyle on the 11th of December.

George, who resided at Cummeen, Dysart and formerly of Currabeg, Athleague, established Coyle and Co. Chartered Accountants, in Society St. in 1985. Over some 36 years of serving clients in business, farming and industry; he built up a reputable, professional, reliable and first class service – with a team of long-serving staff providing clients with a friendly, personable and highly personalised level of service.

George, since the early 90s, was the Accountant to the Chamber of Commerce, The Fair and Festival, The Agricultural Show Society and a host of local Community not for profit enterprises; in town and the hinterland - that valued his judgment, prudence, integrity and fairness.

From the earliest days on the Ballinasloe Area Community Development Company was lucky to enjoy George's professional support. Since his first attendance to AGM in 2007 – for 14 years; George led his team through the annual returns process and all the oftentimes tedious grant sign off work for the various agencies that BACD could find some resources from.

He did so with kindness, patience and flashes of very good humour. His advice was always sound and sought to deliver the best outcome for the client. For many who did not perhaps fully know him – he was the man with the leather brief case and (be times) pipe at the top table of a round of community group annual general meetings where an independent presentation of the annual figures is a statutory requirement.

Conversations with George would be polite and focused but when the business at hand was concluded, he liked nothing better than chatting about the family or indeed matters of the land. He was passionate about his business, his family, but he truly loved farming and all elements of the agricultural sector. He also was deeply involved in the rural community development of Dysart.

We extend our deepest condolences to his wife Maura, children Emer, Niamh, Siobhán and James. His grandchildren Erik, Siún, Ethan and Eamonn George. In-laws, brothers and sisters and wide circle of relatives, neighbours, friends, clients and loyal and attentive staff.

Our business, enterprise and community sector in East Galway and South Roscommon has lost a true mentor, friend and supporter.

- 1). Ann Quinn, Loughbown. Died on 1st Dec. 2021. (sister of John Molloy).
- 2). Willie Reilly, Poolboy Cottages. Died on 7th Dec., 2021.
- 3). Irene O'Grady, Mackney. Died on 7th Dec. 2021.
- 4). Helen Salmon, Cleaghmore & Letterkenny. Died on 10th Dec., 2021.
- 5). Mary Flynn, Dunlo Hill. Died on 19th Dec. 2021.
- 6). Paddy Ward, Creggane. Died on 21st Dec. 2021.
- 7). Paddy Seale, Woodmount, Creagh. Died on 22nd Dec., 2021.
- 8). Martin Donnellan, Ballygill. Died on 23rd Dec., 2021.

2022:

- 1). Jim O'Connor, Jubilee Street, Died on 1st Jan. 2022.
- 2). Sean Kenny, Beagh, Creagh,. Died 4th Jan 2022



The above is the Newspaper Masthead from the 1900s

Just over seventy years ago, Ballinasloe's last family owned weekly newspaper ceased publication. For almost a century "The East Galway Democrat" printed and published by the O'Carroll family, at 6 Society St., was the 8-page broadsheet for news, gossip and sport in the town and the surrounding areas. The Democrat also catered for small printing orders, in any colour-once they were black!

Michael Kelly, who had been a linotype operator with the paper for over thirty years, jumped at the opportunity to purchase the premises and Kelly's Printing Works operated from there until 1983. Then, with the help of his three sons, Michael moved to a new purpose-built factory in the Poolboy Industrial Estate and shortened the name to KPW Print. Now one of the leading printhouses in the country, KPW prints everything from a personalised memorial card to any size autobiography. What changes !

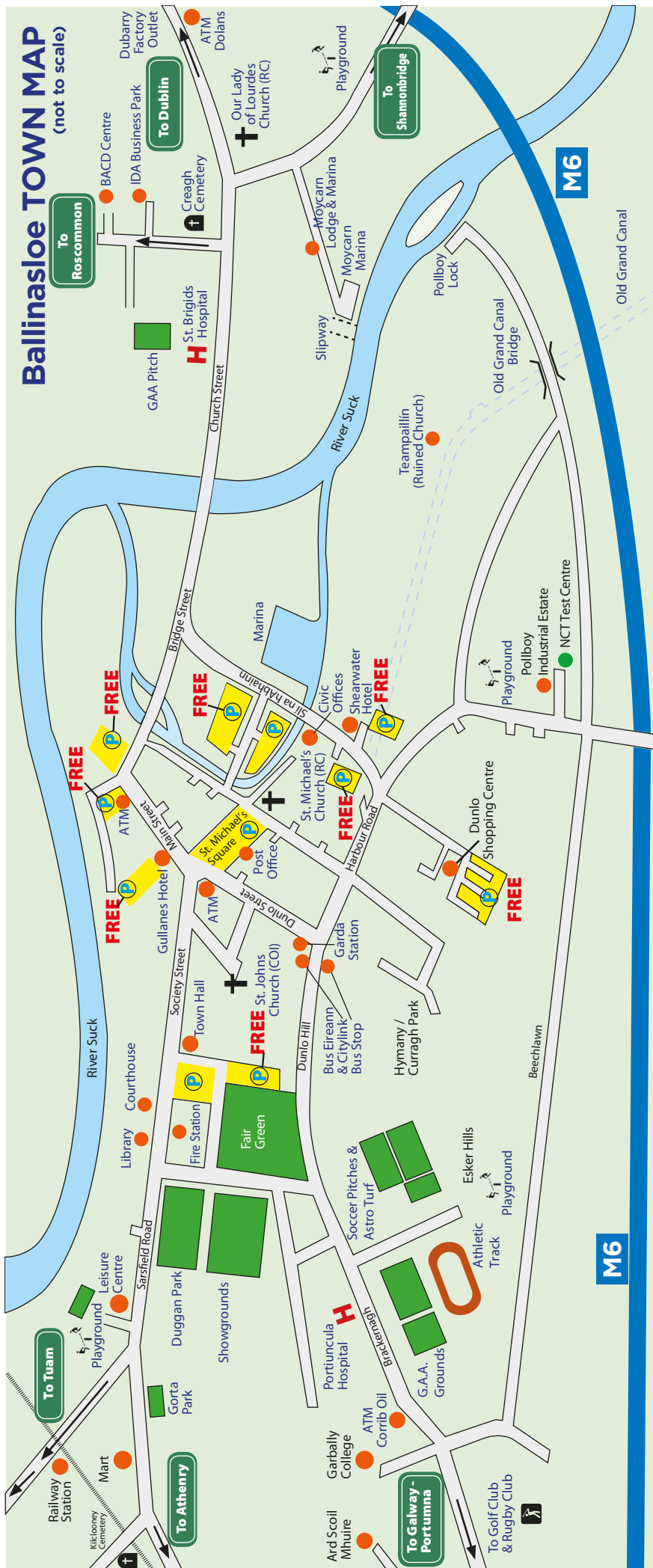


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Ballinasloe TOWN MAP

(not to scale)



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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