

BALLINASLOE LIFE

An insight into the area we live in

Vol. 15 Issue 6: February/March 2026

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Credits

EDITOR: Colm Croffy

REPORTERS:

Julia Prystupa, Maria Connolly

MANAGER BACD /

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER:

Lyn Donnelly

ADVERTISING MANAGER:

Martina Flanagan

EVENTS GUIDE CO-ORDINATOR:

Kevin Walsh

VIDEOGRAPHY: Eamon Chin.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Eamon Chin, Willie Tully, Damian

Mac Con Uladh, Pdraic Kilduff,

Julia Prystupa

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

KPW Print, Ballinasloe

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PHOTOS: John Finnerty, Evelyn

Donellan, Michael S. Kelly,

Robbie Riddell, Toby Wattson



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Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre,
Creagh, Ballinasloe. Co. Galway
T: 090 9646516 F: 090 9646517
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REAMHRA

Welcome to read number 90!! It's been a wobbly and dark start to the year – surreal and dochreidte are two descriptive terms we are all hearing rather frequently lately. People like certainty – for the last of the pre-decimal generation, who have lived alongside the White House capers of 10 incumbents, the return of the Donald appears colossal-like; invading all our thought time and weaponising uncertainty.

For New Year resolutions purists who wait till Imbolc or the great Pagan feast of fertility – everyone could do worse than take 15 mins a day off the keyboard or phone and invest in some community/voluntary activity.

There are over 200 sporting and cultural organisations in our community that need worker bees; give Zuckerberg and Elon less of your waking moments and divert some to your own neighbourhood, its activities, and people who need support.

I had the good fortune to be invited to two memorable milestone events prior to December – the launch of the 150 years of the History of the Rugby Club and the 100th anniversary of the Galway Football team of the 1920s. The organisers of both of these excellent endeavours were able to take the looking glass to the past deeds of our ancestors because the chroniclers of the time invested energy in the rudiments of record

keeping. They rarely hung a picture of a team or squad without naming all the participants. They regularly provided team sheets to local press; they issued reports on their Annual General Meetings with election of officers, achievements of the organisation in the past twelve months, and positions of the local unit on national sporting or cultural policy. I won't be around in 150 years' time to compile the 300th anniversary publications, but I feel sorry for those who will attempt it owing to the complete lack of primary source material.

In the compilation of this publication for the past 15 years, most of our voluntary committees have lost the diligence to record faithfully, for the current or future generations, what is relevant. In the last year, I would have received fewer than 10 AGM reports, of which 75% of photos have no captions!!

90% of the visuals online have no text explaining who is in the photo; 80% of the copy received from sports organisations will never contain the name of the manager, trainer, coach of the squad, and God forbid we ever single out or mention a captain in a social media space again!! Some 60% of the home pages of local organisations will never detail who is on the executive committee or specific contact details.

Welcome to Ballinasloe Life Volume 15 Issue 6

I understand that people are afraid of exposure of minors and themselves on aspects of the sewer that is current social media, but think of what is being denied not just to our readers but to those who come after us. So, special resolution for all schools, club and organisation officers for this year – no more posting without explaining who is doing what, where and when – it will make our job much easier to get better visual content across in socials and magazines.

The fact that Chat GPT can't tell me who played "The Bull" in the first production of The Field in town, or Jane in Calamity Jane, means we as a community must, over the coming months, find a way to archive as much of cultural activities and participants before all those among us with the recollections are gone. And in the words of the poet philosopher John O' Donohue – remember, as we enjoy the crocuses poking through from their winter slumber, that "Grace is the permanent climate of divine kindness; the perennial infusion of springtime into the winter of bleakness".

Slán agus Beannacht,

Colm Croffy,
Editor.



New year resolutions may be broken at this stage. However, we will continue on our all-year-round resolution to deliver all the good news about our community.

We continue to cover Business, Community, Entertainment, Cultural, Sport, Tourism & Heritage.

Most AGMs are held around this time of the year. The one role that should be higher on the priority list is that of the PRO (Public Relations Officer). This individual is key to keeping the wider community informed as to what is going on in the club/organisation and hence has the most potential to garner new members/volunteers. If not already appointed, please give it consideration in the next few weeks.

Some government projects in the pipeline with funds allocated are longer in the pipeline than the magazine, i.e. the new town school, while others, such as the Board of Works scheme, are dragging on forever. The Local Area Municipal Action Plan is now five years in existence, and it is hard to see what has moved during that time.

Private housing projects are building up in the pipeline and it will be interesting to see if local government and the County Council deliver on affordable housing for the area. Up to now, only housing schemes in closer proximity to Galway qualified under this scheme, but commitments have been given to include Ballinasloe over the coming months.

As per Colm's article in our last edition, private enterprise is tipping along fairly OK, but Government-funded projects need a big injection of pace, and hopefully 2026 will see this happening.

Our new St Brigid's Bank Holiday weekend is here and daffodils are beginning to bloom. So, as nature reawakens, let's look forward to a melodious, warmer and sunny springtime.

Seamus Duffy,
Chairman Ballinasloe Area Community Development Clg.



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Bio Gas Plant Refused Planning

By Colm Croffy

Galway Council have refused outright an application by Cycle0 to build a large bio-methane gas plant at Glan Cross, Kellysgrove - where the old Liffey Meats processing plant lies, across from Whytes Concrete works on the Portumna Road, approximately 5 km south-west of the town centre.

In summary, Cycle0 were denied by county planners on 21st Jan on four key grounds:

1. Large trucks would be travelling along a "substandard road" (substandard in width, alignment and surface); it would not be safe for two large trucks to pass one another; it would "endanger public safety by reason of a traffic hazard" and be contrary to the sustainable development of the area.
2. There would be an intensification of road use for the R355; the junction for turning into the site would be situated at the wrong point, as there would be a "substantial" change to sightlines, and it would be particularly hazardous for right-hand turns; "endangering public safety" and being contrary to Galway County Development Plan objectives.
3. The EIA report did not present enough information in sufficient detail to make an assessment of the impact on environment, roads and transportation. There was a lack of information on risks, including what would happen in the event of an incident, or the potential leakage of slurry from slurry feedstock or servicing. This lack of information meant the assessors could not rule out the risk of impacts at European sites protected for flora and fauna. Again, it would contravene objectives laid out in the Galway County Development Plan.
4. European sites - Cycle0 did not provide sufficient information to demonstrate that surrounding European sites, i.e. SAC Esker, would be adequately protected.

The Biogas Awareness Group's campaign mustered some 93 objections, the majority of which were from surrounding local



residents, but some were also from those further afield who have a connection to, or are familiar with, the area through the Hymany Way walkway. Groups such as the National Biogas Concern Group and An Taisce were among the supporting objectors, while St Augustine's National School alone raised three objections among staff, the school board and the principal.

In broad summary, the objections could be categorised around road safety, inadequate road traffic surveys, the local environment, odour control at the plant and during transportation to and from the site, water table issues, local amenity usage, despoiling of heritage sites - Hymany Way and routes to Aughrim Battlefield, alternative sites being incorrectly scored and poorly evaluated, human health, visual intrusion, property evaluation, and the lack of meaningful local public consultation.

Community awareness groups in Limerick and Kildare are still awaiting an outcome decision from An Coimisiún Pleanála following Cycle0's appeal. Cork (Mitchelstown) are submitting their appeal to ACP this month, based on the Cork CoCo decision to approve their AD development from NEPHIN.

Some members of the Ballinasloe Biogas Concern Group - Darren Goode, Robbie Sharpe, Lorna Sharpe and Andrew Larkin - welcomed this decision by the planners, "as it basically agrees with our analysis that the location is totally unsuitable for such an industrial and hazardous development, but we are aware from other groups nationwide how Cycle0 operate, and we suspect there will be a full appeal to An Coimisiún Pleanála. We will therefore be holding further community public meetings in February to make sure our voices are heard in this process too. It's not too late for more people to get involved in the campaign in whatever way possible."

Before the submission deadline, the Ballinasloe Biogas Concern Group arranged two public 'Submission Workshops' in December to support the local community with their submissions.

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Funding for Ahascragh Welcomed

By Maria Connolly

Cllr Alan Harney has welcomed the approval of €250,000 in funding for the Ahascragh Streetscape and Shopfront Enhancement project under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme.

"This funding is very welcome news for Ahascragh. It will allow for improvements to the village streetscape, support local businesses, tackle areas of disrepair and vacancy, and further enhance the character and identity of the village," he said.

"I worked closely with our officials in Galway County Council and the committee of Ahascragh Area Community Enhancement to deliver this project. It was a collaborative effort, and their professionalism and commitment to rural regeneration and enhancement of the local area were key to securing this approval," he noted.

"In recent weeks, I brought my colleague Minister of State for Rural Affairs, Jerry Buttimer TD to visit Ahascragh so he could see first-hand

the potential in the village and the voluntary effort of all those working to develop the area.

The project will focus on a building painting and shopfront scheme, streetscape enhancements, planting and lighting improvements, and measures to improve the overall visual appeal of the centre of the village. It is designed to complement recent public and private investment in Ahascragh, including housing, tourism and enterprise developments.

"Ahascragh is a village with enormous potential. This funding recognises the ambition of the local community and will help ensure the village continues to grow as a vibrant, attractive place to live, work and visit," he added.

He concluded by stating that he looks forward to working with Galway County Council, local groups and property owners to see the project delivered in 2026.

Cllr. Harney Advocates for Maternity Services

Cllr Alan Harney has welcomed a constructive meeting with the Minister for Health, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD, alongside Deputy Pete Roche, as part of ongoing efforts to secure the restoration of full maternity services at Portiuncula University Hospital.

"I appreciated the opportunity to meet with the Minister and to continue to advocate strongly for the women and families who rely on our hospital. The Minister has been clear that a restoration of maternity services can be delivered when the appropriate conditions are in place and when the necessary service improvements have been achieved. I thank her for her time and engagement on this important issue."

Cllr Harney also noted recent comments by HSE CEO Bernard Gloster at the Oireachtas Health Committee, confirming that the HSE is now aligned with the Minister's position regarding the restoration of services.

"This alignment is welcome. It has not always been the case in the past, and it is positive to hear the HSE acknowledge that the decisions taken could be reversed in the

future," he states.

Cllr Harney noted, "Portiuncula has scored highly in the 2025 Maternity Patients Experience Survey, and the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Coulter Smith Report is now well advanced. The remaining five reviews are due to be completed by March, and I hope any further action items will be implemented without delay."

"I still have unanswered questions about the governance failings that allowed these issues to arise so soon after the publication of the Walker

Report in 2018 and following the decision to transfer higher-risk births away from Portiuncula. This has created new risks by forcing women to travel longer distances to access maternity care, something I do not believe is sustainable or acceptable in the long term."

"The priority now must be on ensuring patient safety and strengthening governance at Portiuncula," he concluded.



Cllr Alan Harney with Minister for Health Jennifer Carol Mc Neill TD and Peter Roche T.D. at their meeting recently



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Cllr Parsons Calls for Action on Electricity Outages

By Maria Connolly

Cllr Parsons tabled a motion to call for urgent action on repeated electricity outages affecting households in the Ballinasloe Municipal District area.

There has been concern about the impact on residents, many of whom have faced severe disruption due to frequent power cuts, including a 14-hour outage. Families with infants, people working from home, and households reliant on heat pump systems have reported significant hardship during these periods.

Speaking after the motion was passed at the January MDC meeting, Cllr Parsons said: "These outages are not isolated incidents; they are part of an ongoing pattern of poor service affecting a growing number of homes in the Mountbellew, Glenamaddy, and Creagh areas, and throughout locations in the Municipal District area. Modern homes cannot function safely or comfortably when the power goes out



Cllr Evelyn Parsons

repeatedly for long durations. Residents deserve a reliable and resilient electricity supply, and today's motion ensures that this issue is formally addressed."

The motion calls for: a written report from ESB Networks outlining the causes of recent outages and assessing the condition of the local distribution network; details of any planned works intended to improve reliability; attendance of a representative at a future Municipal District meeting to answer questions; and a letter from the Council to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) seeking oversight on repeated rural outages and monitoring of service standards.

Cllr Parsons stated: "Rural communities cannot be left behind when it comes to essential infrastructure. This motion is a first step... I will continue engaging with ESB Networks, the CRU, and affected residents until a resolution is in place."

New Salt and Grit Bin Installed

A new salt and grit bin has been installed in town as part of a community safety initiative instigated by Cllr Evelyn Parsons, aimed at reducing the risk of slips and falls during periods of frost and icy weather.

The bin is located at Fairgreen Carpark, Society Street, and once filled, the salt will be available on a first-come, first-served basis for use by local voluntary and community groups as well as local businesses. Its purpose is to support the treatment of public footpaths, shared public spaces and reduced speed limit zones within the town.

"Falls are one of the most common causes of injury, particularly among older people, and the risk increases significantly

during winter weather. A single fall can result in serious injury, prolonged recovery and loss of independence, while also placing additional pressure on emergency departments and hospital services. Preventing slips and falls is therefore a matter of public safety, accessibility and inclusiveness," said Cllr Parsons.

"When we take practical, early steps together as a community, we can reduce risk, protect people's independence and make everyday public spaces safer. I made an allocation to install an accessible salt bin from my limited discretionary funding and am keen to see if this simple measure is going to be effective."

The salt provided is intended for use on public areas only, and users are asked to apply it responsibly.



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Calls To Update Creagh Area Plan

By Colm Croffy

Councillor Valerie Duffy (Fine Gael) raised the issue of the Creagh Area Plan at a recent meeting of Roscommon County Council, calling on the Council to create a new plan for the district.

The previous plan was developed 18 years ago and covered the years 2008-14. However, as Cllr Duffy highlighted, "much has changed for the area since 2008." The Galway-Dublin motorway has been completed, with many people driving through Creagh to access it via slip roads; the local GAA club, Padraig Pearses, has greatly increased in size; the local garage has expanded; and a number of small businesses have been created, providing important employment opportunities.

New paths and walkways have also been funded by Roscommon County Council and others, supporting people to enhance their health and well-being, while a new TFI Galway Local Link Bus has helped Creagh residents to access areas between Loughrea and Athlone.

Cllr Duffy also noted that the possibility of selling parts of St Brigid's hospital and the promised development of new healthcare facilities mean that people in both the Co Roscommon and Co Galway parts of Creagh will see new developments constructed.

"I want to acknowledge all of the work that has been done by Roscommon County Council to support Roscommon people living in the very south of Roscommon," Cllr Duffy said. "However,



Councillor Valerie Duffy

I do feel that we can do more to include this area of the county in the work, planning, and innovation that the rest of the county benefits from."

The need to focus on Creagh has been highlighted by other bodies, too. In a response to the draft Roscommon Plan in 2021, the Northern and West Regional Assembly noted that: "The areas of Creagh and Hodson Bay are of particular importance because of their proximity to and links with large settlements in adjoining counties. RCC has already recognised this potential with Cortober linked with Carrick-on-Shannon. The Regional Assembly would urge that similar considerations be given to Creagh linked with Ballinasloe and Hodson Bay linked with Athlone".

Cllr Duffy emphasised that it: "makes sense to develop a long-term plan to work with Councillors and Executive staff in Galway County Council and especially Ballinasloe...so we co-ordinate and maximise the possibilities and outcomes for the region of South Roscommon/ East Galway." The timing is excellent as the council is updating its County Development Plan. The Councillor urged the council to act now as it will take time to set up consultations with Galway councillors, to consult with the public, and to review new legislation put in place since the last development plan.

The motion was broadly supported by other councillors. Cllr John Keogh (Fianna Fail) added that it was time for the council to work with their counterparts in Ballinasloe to develop a joint area plan that incorporated Creagh.



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Seamus Duffy In Profile

By Colm Croffy

Having retired from AIB as Branch Manager in Ballinasloe with 35 years' service done, Seamus moved into the role of a self-employed Financial Advisor with New Ireland Assurance in July 2015.

He provides free consultations on matters relating to life cover, savings and investments, as well as pensions. Everyone's circumstances are different, so unique solutions are required.

"Starting out with life cover, everyone's priority should be to have enough lump sum on death cover to clear all debts. Secondly, you need to take into account dependants and the length of time they will remain that way. There are various forms of life cover, i.e. mortgage protection, whole of life cover, income on death, lump sum on death, income protection and specified illness cover," he explains.

With regard to savings and investments, he can offer various solutions for medium- to long-term options, both in the form of regular savings and for lump sum amounts.

"The type of investment recommended will depend on your attitude to risk, the term you wish to invest for and your overall financial situation. You will always need to keep money on demand with your financial institution, but it would be nice to have the potential to earn a decent return to beat inflation with remaining funds," he states.

"When it comes to pensions, we have seen numerous state interventions over the last 30 years to simplify same, but it just seems to add another layer to complicate them. I advise on all types of personal pension, both before and post-retirement," Seamus continues.



Seamus Duffy

He recommends that it is vital to review same on at least an annual basis to take into account any personal changes and update yourself on market movements. It is important to have a knowledge of what has been impacting on fund values and what are the indicators that will affect future market trends. We all hear the news headlines of any sizeable daily movement, but it is the longer-term trend that is a better indicator. It is all about time in the market rather than timing.

The new "Future Fund" initiative, which started on 1st January, is going to add another 800,000 employees into the private pension fund market to help supplement their state pension. "It is an excellent initiative but is limited, and I would recommend that you seek advice on additional options open to you. In essence, I am here to help you plan; no matter what age you are. Failing to plan

is planning to fail," he notes.

While all insurance providers provide very similar products, how to navigate them is the key, and being able to talk to someone face to face is so important. "I have no doubt you will come away from any meeting with a much greater understanding than when you went in, compared to dealing with someone online. I am very flexible in the locations where I will meet you and times, day or night, weekday or weekend, when we can meet," explains Seamus.

Please feel free to contact him on **087 2506431** or by email seamus.duffy@newireland.ie.



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Public Speakers' Club Formed

By Maria Connolly



L TO R: Back Row: Chris Collins, Derek Walsh, John Donnellan, Louise Reynolds, Joseph O'Connor, Michael McCullagh, Trevor Wood **FRONT ROW:** Helen Keenan, Francis Keenan, Siobhán Fitzgerald, Kerry Peters.



Public Speaking Group in Action

Ballinasloe Public Speakers' Club held its second meeting in the Business Hub on Society Street recently. It was wonderful to welcome some more new faces and voices to the club.

This club is open to people from all walks of life and of all ages (from 18-100+). Do you want to improve your communication skills, need support preparing for an important presentation at work, or have a special family or social event coming up at which you will need to speak? Or perhaps you realise it's time to try to overcome your fear of public speaking? If so, then Ballinasloe Public Speakers' Club can help.

The club is aiming to charter with Toastmasters International in the near future. Toastmasters is neither about toast nor simply making formal toasts. It's the world's leading not-for-profit organisation dedicated to enabling and empowering people across the world to improve and develop their communication and leadership skills.

With core values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence, the mission of a Toastmasters club is to "provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence".

Toastmasters was founded 102 years ago by Ralph C. Smedley, who noted, "We learn best in times of joyment".

Ballinasloe Public Speakers' Club aims to prepare meetings that will empower all who walk through its doors to progress their communication and leadership skills at their own pace, in a safe, supportive and very enjoyable environment.

The next meeting will be in the Business Enterprise Hub, Society Street, Ballinasloe (H53 TH24), on February 26th at 7pm. All are welcome.

For further details, contact Siobhán at fitzsiobhan@hotmail.com.

PROPERTY MATTERS

Solid Foundations: The Ballinasloe Property Market in 2026

As we head into 2026, the property market around Ballinasloe and east Galway feels steady and grounded. Demand has been consistently strong for years, while supply remains tight — a pattern that looks set to continue. This is not a boom-and-bust story. Instead, it's a market built on solid local demand, sensible pricing, and people buying homes for the long term rather than chasing short-term gains. Overall, the market feels resilient rather than extreme, supported by real economic activity and sensibly kept in check by affordability.

What's driving activity locally will come as no surprise. Strong employment, growing families, and an increasing number of locals

returning home are all helping to sustain demand. Many people who have spent time away are now recognising the real value Ballinasloe offers — from good schools and active sports clubs to shops, services, and a strong sense of community.

Location remains a major strength. With easy access to Galway city, Athlone, and the motorway network, Ballinasloe continues to appeal to commuters and hybrid workers who want more space and better value without sacrificing convenience.

Overall, the Ballinasloe property market in 2026 rewards realism, preparation, and good local advice — a positive and stable outlook for the year ahead.



Thinking of Selling in 2026?

If you're considering selling your home this year — or even just thinking ahead — now is the time to start the conversation. Early planning gives you more control, stronger positioning, and a smoother sale when the time comes.

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The Christmas Lights Funding Campaign 2025

By Colm Croffy

This year's Christmas Lights Campaign once again demonstrated the generosity and community spirit of Ballinasloe's businesses and community, whose continued support remains the backbone of keeping the town shining bright each festive season.

Installation and insurance costs rose significantly this year, bringing the overall budget to approximately €30,000. Despite these pressures, local businesses stepped up through their annual contributions, radio advertising, donations and fundraising support. Their commitment ensures that Ballinasloe continues to attract shoppers, visitors and families throughout the Christmas period.

The town's festive radio station returned this year as Forever 80s Galway Radio, Ireland's first AI-powered 80s station. The station has been listened to over 15,000 times, with an average of around 170 listens every day, helping to promote local shopping while spreading festive cheer across the town and beyond. Special recognition goes to Shane McNeill for his tremendous work in driving the station forward and delivering such an innovative and successful project.

"We have to really thank Philip Ward and his crew, who came on board at late notice as this year's electrical contractor

and delivered the installation to a very high standard. Acknowledgement is also due to Liam and Matt Kenny, who looked after the Christmas lights for many years and played a huge role in building the display that we enjoy today," states BACD Manager Lyn Donnelly.

The switch-on ceremony was another wonderful community celebration, with thanks extended to all the performers and stewards who ensured a safe and enjoyable event for everyone. Appreciation is also extended to Stanley Clarke & Sons, who provided the electricity to power the Gig Rig on the night.

While this year's campaign regrettably finished with a deficit, it highlights the urgent need for a new, sustainable funding model to ensure Ballinasloe's Christmas lights can continue long into the future. A significant number of bulbs now need to be replaced or repaired, as much of the infrastructure is over six years old, meaning further investment will be required over the years ahead.

The Christmas lights are overseen by a voluntary sub-committee operating under the umbrella of Ballinasloe Area Community Development (BACD), and new volunteers and supporters are always welcome.

The challenge now is to find a way of raising an additional €10,000 on a recurring basis, and members of the public and business community are invited to come forward with ideas on how this can be achieved. Without securing this additional funding, the town will face serious challenges in lighting Ballinasloe next Christmas.

"With the continued backing of the business community and the wider public, it is hoped that a sustainable solution can be found to keep Ballinasloe shining for generations to come. On behalf of the Christmas Lights Sub Committee, sincere thanks to everyone who contributed, volunteered and supported this year's campaign," stated Lyn. Contact BACD on 0909646516 with any suggestions.



Seamus Duffy, Martina Flanagan, Pat Vaughan and Lyn Donnelly

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Income 2025 (to date)	
Business Contributions	€13,317.50
Ballinasloe Credit Union Social Fund	€ 4,000.00
People of the Year Raffle	€ 1,400.00
Light a Light Campaign /Cards	€1,146.00
GCC Festival Grant	-
Radio Advertising	€4,000.00
	23,863.50

Expenditure 2025: (to date)	
Installation, Repairs & Storage	€22,355.00
Replacement drivers Bulbs & Baubles	€2,066.00
Electricity Costs	€1,271.00
Insurance	€2,400.00
Festival, Signage & Admin Costs	€ 1,100.00
	€29,192.00
Deficit	-€5,328.50

Income 2024	
Business Contributions	€13,975.00
Ballinasloe Credit Union Social Fund	€ 4,000.00
LIDL	€ 2,000.00
Light a Light Campaign /Cards	€ 2,228.43
GCC Festival Grant	€ 1,500.00
Radio Advertising	€ 4,900.00
	€28,603.43

Expenditure 2024:	
Installation , Repairs, Replacement Bulbs, Baubles & Storage	€21,344.18
Electricity Costs	€ 1,281.19
Insurance	€2,400.00
Festival, Signage, Radio & Admin Costs	€ 2,134.28
	€27,159.65
	€ 1,443.78



Kevin McMorrow, Santa, Seamus Duffy, Sean Kelly, James Burke



Family and friends enjoying the festivities

Contributors

- ▶ Ballinasloe Credit Union
- ▶ Supermac's
- ▶ Salmons Department Store
- ▶ Galway Local Enterprise Office
- ▶ An Tain
- ▶ Ballinasloe Library
- ▶ Ballinasloe Opticians
- ▶ Barna Recycling
- ▶ Brewery Lane Bar & Restaurant
- ▶ Brian Brennan Coaching
- ▶ Creagh Medical (Surmodics)
- ▶ Divilly's Carry Out Off Licence
- ▶ Duane's Pharmacy
- ▶ Gibbon's Pillar House Bar & B&B
- ▶ Joe's Bar
- ▶ Joseph M Jordan Solicitors
- ▶ Kariba's Restaurant & Coffee House
- ▶ Keller Travel
- ▶ Keller's of Ballinasloe & Carolines Hairdressers
- ▶ Kidz Korner
- ▶ KPW Print
- ▶ Murphy's Medical Hall
- ▶ Stanley Clarke & Sons
- ▶ Utah Department Store
- ▶ AIB
- ▶ Bank of Ireland
- ▶ Bar One Racing
- ▶ Barry's Cycles
- ▶ Beckwith Nilan Accountants
- ▶ Billy's Discount
- ▶ Bistro 18
- ▶ Billy King Pharmacy
- ▶ Bread Basket
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- ▶ Shearwater Hotel & Spa
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- ▶ SuperValu
- ▶ Talking Heads
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- ▶ Dr Cormac Collins & Dr Ronan McGuckin Dental Practice
- ▶ Euro Giant
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New Manager at Moycarn Lodge

By Eamon Chin

On any given day at the Moycarn Lodge, familiar faces welcome guests, keeping the rhythm of the riverside venue flowing – a warmth that now extends to its leadership, with Sheila Alzaga stepping into the role of Operations Manager at the popular destination.

A familiar presence to many regulars, Sheila has worked at the boutique hotel for several years, most recently as assistant manager. Her appointment reflects both her experience within the business and her strong understanding of the day-to-day operations of the lodge.

The 27-year-old's journey in hospitality began in 2018, working closely with owners Michael and Miriam Dolan. "Over the years, I've learned the business from the ground up," she says. "That experience gave me a deeper appreciation for leadership, teamwork, and the standards required to run a successful hospitality business."

Originally from the Philippines, Sheila arrived in Ireland at just 17 and quickly settled into life in Ballinasloe. "My mother and stepfather worked incredibly hard to migrate me to Ireland from the Philippines," she says.

Alongside building her career in hospitality, she continued her education, studying a Computer Technology course. "Over time, Ballinasloe truly became home."

Her progression at the Moycarn has seen her gain experience across a variety of roles over three years, something she says proved invaluable in preparing her for management. "I started in a frontline role as a waitress, then moved on to supervising on the floor, gradually taking on more responsibility and working closely with the management team," Sheila says.

Taking on her new responsibilities during the festive period brought both opportunity and challenge. Sheila describes the experience as exciting and feels honoured. "The transition was challenging, especially with the busy Christmas period, but with



Sheila Alzaga, Moycarn Ops Director

the support of my colleagues, it's been a much smoother and more positive experience."

The Moycarn's success is largely attributable to its team, something Sheila is keen to emphasise. She is most proud of those working behind-the-scenes, from front-of-house to online engagement, with Rebekah overseeing the venue's social media presence. "Special mention has to go to Miriam, Mike, Jackie, Gary, Joanna, Sean, Ger, and honestly, the list could go on," she says. "From housekeeping to the kitchen and every department in between, the dedication and teamwork here are incredible. The friendly, welcoming atmosphere comes directly from the people who work here, and guests feel that as soon as they walk through the door."

That strong team foundation is reflected in what the Moycarn is known for – its food. "Our head chef, Gary Murphy, works wonders with every dish he puts out," Sheila says, describing him as a "yes man" for creativity and quality. Recent additions to their refreshed seasonal menu showcase new cooking techniques, including smoking and sous vide, giving classic dishes an innovative twist.

The Moycarn Lodge has undergone significant development over the years and has established itself as a key hospitality destination in the area. Located on the banks of the River Suck, the scenic riverside venue has built a strong reputation for food, service and atmosphere. Its connection to the community and its scenic setting attracts both locals and visitors from further afield. "It's the combination of good service, consistent quality, and a strong connection to the local community," Sheila says.

Looking ahead, Sheila's priority is on maintaining high standards across the board. "My main focus is supporting the team, ensuring excellence and consistency across every part of the business," she says. She also highlighted new initiatives designed to enhance the guest experience, including a 10% discount for



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local businesses from 7 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Plans are underway to make full use of the riverfront setting during the spring and summer, including concerts, BBQ parties, and the beer garden with its new bar.

As she begins this new chapter, Sheila expresses her appreciation to the community that supports the Moycarn and looks forward to welcoming both familiar faces and newcomers through its doors for many years to come.

For bookings and enquiries, contact info@moycarnlodge.ie.



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Strong turnout for Pulse Club Meetup on Local SEO and Social Media

The latest Pulse Club Lunchtime Meetup, held recently at Ballinasloe Enterprise Hub, attracted a strong turnout of local entrepreneurs, remote workers and business owners keen to learn how to improve their online visibility.

The session, titled “Getting Found & Getting Followed – Local SEO and Social Media Marketing for Small Businesses”, was delivered by Honoria Mitchell Black and Niamh Creaven Connaughton of Araya Business & Marketing Solutions, alongside Joe Glennon of Kickstart Web Design & Training.

Attendees were given practical, easy-to-apply advice on how to improve their presence on Google, attract more local customers, and use social media more effectively to grow their businesses. The speakers shared real-world examples and simple strategies that small businesses can implement immediately, regardless of size or sector.

At the meeting it was announced that a number of free one-to-one mentoring places, supported through EU Just Transition Fund (EU JTF) funding awarded to Ballinasloe Area Community Development (BACD), were being made available to local businesses. The announcement was met with strong interest on the day, with many places taken immediately. A limited number of mentoring sessions are still available and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. These hour-long sessions will take place with either ARAYA or Kickstart, depending on the business’s area of interest following the presentations, and will provide tailored guidance on local search visibility, website performance and social media strategy. SMEs interested in participating are encouraged to make contact.

The Pulse Club meets on the last Thursday of every month, providing a regular opportunity for learning, networking and business support. The next meetup is scheduled for Thur. 26th February.

The Pulse Club is always keen to hear from local businesses interested in hosting a session or presenting their own business journey and expertise.

For further information, contact lyn@bacd.ie or 0909646516 .



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Galánta New Skin Clinic Opens

By Colm Croffy



Anyone passing by Society Street recently will have noticed a new beauty clinic, Galánta Skin, next to Utopia. It is the creation of Ailbhe Gullane, the daughter of Tomás and Caroline Gullane of the famous Main St Hotel.

Ailbhe is an experienced beauty therapist who is also qualified in nutritional therapy. Having started her career in Athlone, she quickly progressed through the ranks, eventually becoming a general manager at Urba Beauty.

She decided to study nutrition four years ago "from a growing belief that there was a missing link between traditional skin treatments, skincare and internal health – particularly gut health". She adds that "opening my own clinic felt like the next natural step. After years of working within other businesses, I wanted the freedom to create a space that truly reflects my values – where clients aren't rushed, treatment isn't trend-led and skin health always comes first".

She chose the name as "in Irish, Galánta means elegant, graceful or refined. I wanted something Irish that reflected the atmosphere of the clinic – classy, elegant and refined, but still warm and welcoming", she explains.

Ailbhe offers a wide range of treatments, tailored to individual concerns. Services include in-depth skin consultations, product recommendations and personalised facials, as well as advanced skin therapies such as microneedling and liquid microneedling.

Galánta's key feature is the bespoke skin-nutrition consultations

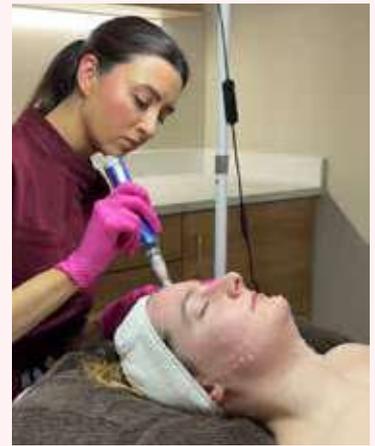
she offers, which are carefully designed for each individual. "To me, the skin reflects what's happening inside the body," she says. She also has a philosophy of dedicated, personal care. "I don't believe in one-size-fits-all treatments or pushing unnecessary procedures or skincare products. My clients receive honest advice, realistic expectations and treatment plans designed for long-term skin health," she adds.

The clinic opened late last year and Ailbhe says that the response so far "has exceeded all of my expectations. I was overwhelmed by the support... demand has been incredibly strong, and the clinic currently has a waiting list of around four weeks, which has been both humbling and hugely encouraging".

Ailbhe is keen to acknowledge those who helped her opening. "First and foremost, my husband (and self-proclaimed project manager) Patrick... We got married in July and went on our honeymoon to Society Street in August. Patrick did everything – or found somebody who knew how to do it!" she notes.

She adds that "my parents, Tomás and Caroline, have always stood behind me... growing up around their work ethic and commitment to service has had a huge influence on how I run my own business today. And finally, our exceptionally talented tradesmen: builder Ian Moloney, plumber Kealan Daly, electrician John Lohan, and plasterer and painter José, who worked around the clock".

If you would like to book an appointment with Ailbhe, you can search Galánta Skin on Google, or call the clinic on (087) 337 2227 and leave a message. Services range from €60–€300. She also shares regular updates on Instagram at [ailbhe_galata skin](#).



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Marion Hendrick Retires From Pharmacy

By Colm Croffy

The pharmacy in Tesco has been run by Marion Hendrick for some 32 years since she opened on the 2nd of July 1993 as a stand-alone store in the Crazy Prices Shopping Centre and moved to Tesco in 2011.

She passed the business to her daughter Hazel in 2024 before filling her final orders in December of last year.

Hazel has worked in the pharmacy as a pharmacist for eight years and throughout her teenage years as a counter assistant. It has been part of her life since she was a child, stocking the shelves at 10 years of age prior to the first day her mother opened.

The Hendricks are an independent, family-run business, not part of a chain.

Looking back on what it was like being in business locally, Marion states, "It took a while to get established; it was great once I did. Country people are, in my experience, lovely to deal with and very good at taking advice and appreciating it. My customers have remained loyal even when I moved from one part of the town to the other; they stayed loyally with me."

"I would like to acknowledge my loyal customers who have been with me from the beginning and their families who have stayed loyal to us through the generations," she affirms.

Hazel is originally from Athlone, qualifying with an ITEC diploma in anatomy and physiology in 2005, a Bachelor of Business from AIT in 2007, along with a National Certificate in Exercise and Fitness (NCEF) from U.L in 2008. She worked as a fitness instructor, swim teacher and personal trainer with Athlone Regional Sport Centre for a decade and ran her own fitness classes for 10 years before completing a Master of Business in 2011. "I always loved looking after people's health and regularly worked with my mother in the pharmacy throughout this period. I decided to apply to college to do pharmacy in 2013. I completed my degree in Trinity College Dublin in 2018. I spent a year working in Crumlin's Children's Hospital while completing my Master of Pharmacy through RCSI Dublin. I learned so much from working with children, a rewarding and sometimes emotional journey. I moved home in 2019 and decided to work alongside my mother, and I loved working with the people of Ballinasloe. I feel part of the community and I was grateful to take over from my mother in 2024," she explains.

On a personal level, she has been an avid yogi for 15 years and became a yoga and Ayurvedic teacher in 2024.



Marion Hendrick

Ayurveda is the "Science of Life", an ancient, holistic Indian system of medicine that treats the whole person – physical, mental, and spiritual – as interconnected. She will continue this journey with a trip to India this year to an Ayurvedic centre. "I also have a deep love for animals and their rights and have two cats given to me in 2020, during the darkness of Covid, by a fabulous patient of mine," she explains.

The business will offer more services to patients to help them access healthcare more efficiently, safely and in a timely manner. They already offer 24-hour blood pressure monitoring, free contraception services, free blood pressure checks, men's health services, the HRT scheme and, by the end of March, will be offering the common conditions service, where medication can be prescribed for eight common conditions through patient consultation.

Offering a range of over-the-counter products and advice, they stock Elave, La Roche Posay, CeraVe, Epaderm, Medicare, reading glasses, earrings, Jenny Glow perfumes, along with a wide range of perfumes and medical devices.

The team includes Niamh Walsh, the pharmacist who works alongside Hazel. She has over 17 years' experience and is a qualified health coach and yoga teacher.

Paula Gaffey is the manager and technician, who has been with the firm for over 10 years and was recently awarded Technician of the Year at the Pharmacy Excellence Awards. Teresa Whyte is a native of Ballinasloe with over 40 years of experience in pharmacy. Una Sheffield is the over-the-counter assistant, currently completing her final part of the pharmacy over-the-counter training through the Irish Pharmacy Union. Mairead Gatley works with them on Saturdays, training to be an occupational therapist and is a native.

Two other pharmacists, Hilary Staunton and Deirdre Kelly, work regularly as part of the team.

Patients can now order their prescriptions to be sent via email directly from the GP and call to get it ready for a timely service.

They are open seven days a week – Monday to Saturday, 9.30 am to 2 pm, 2.30 pm to 6 pm. Sunday, 11 am to 5 pm. Bank holidays, 11 am to 2 pm.

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Local Man Wins New Ford in National Competition

By Maria Connolly



Teresa Kilmartin, Managing Director of Fred Kilmartin Ltd, Colm Naughton, Winner of the 'Win a Ford' test drive competition and Maurice O'Connell of Ford Ireland.



(L-R): Michael Kelly (Sales Manager), Teresa Kilmartin (Managing Director) Yvonne Naughton (Colm's wife) Colm Naughton (Winner), Maurice O'Connell (Ford Ireland) and John O'Connor (Sales executive) at the handover of the 'Win a Ford' test drive competition

Fred Kilmartin Ltd was delighted to host a special handover event recently to celebrate a major win for a customer, as Ballinasloe man Colm Naughton was announced the winner of Ford Ireland's "Win an Explorer" test drive competition.

The competition, which ran nationwide across Ford dealerships, attracted significant interest from customers eager to experience Ford's latest all-electric SUV. Colm emerged as the lucky winner, with his winning entry coming through Fred Kilmartin Ltd, making the occasion particularly special for the local community.

Colm comes from a farming background in Cloonark, Co. Roscommon, where he was raised by his parents, Pat and Julia. He now lives locally with his wife, Yvonne, and their young daughter. He was delighted to share the occasion with his family, making the win all the more special for those closest to him.

To mark the achievement, the team at Fred Kilmartin Ltd hosted a celebratory handover event at their Ballinasloe showroom. Guests were welcomed into a transformed showroom setting, complete with a ceremonial reveal of the all-new Ford Explorer, refreshments, and an atmosphere befitting such a standout moment. Family, friends, dealership staff, and representatives from Ford Ireland gathered to share in the celebration.

Speaking at the event, the winner said: "I genuinely never win anything, so this still hasn't fully sunk in yet. When I got the call, I thought it was a joke at first. To win a competition like this is unbelievable, and the whole team at Fred Kilmartin made today a really special experience."

Conor Gillespie, Marketing Lead at Fred Kilmartin Ltd, highlighted the importance of the occasion for both the dealership and the community. "It was a fantastic event from start to finish, and we were absolutely delighted to be associated with Ford Ireland for such an exciting national competition," said Conor. "What made it even more special was seeing a local man win. Moments like this really showcase the strength of the Ford brand and the connection we have with our customers here in Ballinasloe and the surrounding areas."

For Fred Kilmartin Ltd, the event was another milestone, reinforcing the dealership's strong partnership with Ford Ireland and its ongoing focus on delivering memorable customer experiences.

As Colm took delivery of his new Ford Explorer, the celebrations served as a reminder that sometimes, big wins can start at your local dealership.

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Society Street Pharmacy Changes Hands

By Colm Croffy

Beloved local pharmacist, Claire Healy MPSI, worked on Society St for 27 years (from 1998 until mid-2025), when the business was purchased by Pure Pharmacy.

Pure is Ireland's leading value pharmacy chain, with a network of over 20 pharmacies nationwide.

Supervising Pharmacist at the new store, Tomas Cosgrove, says that Claire's has left a memorable legacy. "She consistently went above and beyond for all her patients and customers. Her contribution to the local community as a top class healthcare professional and a supporter of all causes within the community will never be forgotten."

Pure Pharmacy have made a commitment to retain all the existing staff: "to keep continuity for the community so there are always plenty of familiar faces for our longstanding loyal customer base," Tomas explains.

This means that customers will continue to see Carmel Connelly and Ethel Crehan at the counter, providing healthcare advice and safe supplying of over-the-counter medication, while Christina Moran and Lauren Gavin keep the dispensary running from day to day. Pure Pharmacy have also committed to retaining the ethos of the previous owners.

There will be some changes to the shop in terms of layout and branding, but the pharmacy will continue to offer the same, comprehensive stock of products, as well as being the sole official stockists of Nuxe and Pestle and Mortar products. Tomas also hopes to upgrade some of the facilities such as the consultation room.

Pure Pharmacy aims to provide a patient-centred approach to healthcare provision, and the store in Ballinasloe offers a variety of blood screening services, ranging from a comprehensive scan to simple vitamin B12 check.

A full range of services is available to view on <https://purepharmacy.ie>. Tomas adds that: "these services allow people to take a proactive, informed and convenient approach to managing their health."



Some of the staff at Pure Pharmacy. L-R: Lauren Gavin (Pharmacy Technician), Carmel Connelly (Front of Shop), Ethel Crehan (Front of Shop) and Tomas Cosgrave (Supervising Pharmacist). **NOT PICTURED IN THE PHOTO ARE** Trish Halliday (Pharmacist) and Christina Moran (Dispensing Assistant).

In addition to blood testing, Pure Pharmacy also offer genetic screening, which will look at how your genes may interact with over 70 of the most commonly prescribed medications, including painkillers, contraceptives and anti-depressants. Tomas explains that this: "can assist your prescribing doctor in selecting the best medications for you based on your own unique genetic makeup." The test can also help to determine the most appropriate dosage. It can be done in-store or from the comfort of your own home.

Tomas has been a qualified pharmacist since 2015, having studied pharmacy in Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen Scotland. He also has a qualification in Biomedical Science from the University of Galway. A native of Mayo, he currently lives in Athlone. He is: "a big supporter of all things Mayo-GAA-related but have a grudging respect for Galway's nine football All Irelands!" He would like to thank everyone in Ballinasloe for welcoming him to the town. "Since taking the job I have had nothing but warm welcomes and support from all the locals."

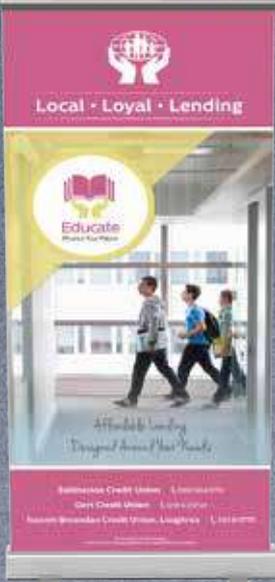
Pure Pharmacy is open Monday – Friday 9.15am – 6.00pm, and Saturday 10.00am – 4.00pm. You can contact them on **(090) 964 2252** or by email at pureballinasloe@gmail.com.



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18th New Academic Year for Paramedic College

By Colm Croffy



Aeromedical Programme: Students pictured following their recent graduation, marking the successful completion of their Aeromedical programme. The class is shown outside the ambulance facilities shortly after graduating last week.

This January marked another important milestone for Ballinasloe as one group of student paramedics celebrated their graduation while a new cohort began their training at the National Ambulance Service College. It also signals the 18th consecutive academic year of paramedic education in the town. The National Ambulance Service College (NASC) has been based at the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre since 2008, when it became the second NASC campus to open outside of its original base at St Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park, Dublin. Since then, the Ballinasloe campus has played a key role in expanding national paramedic training while becoming firmly embedded in the local community.

A National Role, Delivered Locally

NASC is Ireland's central training institution for ambulance and paramedic professionals. From Ballinasloe, it delivers degree-level paramedic education, EMT training, and ongoing professional development for serving emergency personnel. The National Ambulance Service operates four college campuses nationally: Tallaght, Ballinasloe, Tullamore, and Cork, with the Ballinasloe campus focusing primarily on paramedic degree programmes, among others. The teaching team at the campus consists of eight clinical tutors and two administrative staff. All tutors are qualified Advanced Paramedics with extensive frontline experience. Many are also involved in teaching, research, and the ongoing development of paramedicine as a profession.

From Classroom to Front Line

Student paramedics in Ballinasloe College complete a three-year Bachelor of Paramedic Science (Honours) degree, delivered through a partnership between NASC and University College Cork (UCC). This means students benefit from both university-level academic standards and hands-on, practical training delivered by experienced paramedics.

Students are employed and paid while they train, combining classroom learning, simulation exercises, and real-world placements. On average, 25 to 30 student paramedics graduate from the Ballinasloe campus each year. When additional training for qualified paramedics and EMTs is included, the

campus supports around 80 to 100 graduates annually, making a significant contribution to the national ambulance workforce. Graduates are fully prepared for professional practice and meet the requirements for registration with the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC). Many go on to work with the National Ambulance Service, while others pursue further study or specialist roles. As postgraduate student Bill Nolan puts it: "I enjoy helping people and having an impact in their lives. It's very rewarding looking after patients and making them feel a bit better and secure."

Working with the Community

Since opening, NASC Ballinasloe has worked closely with local and national emergency services. The campus regularly hosts training and development sessions for organisations such as An Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces, the Irish Coast Guard, Fire Services, and voluntary first-responder groups. This shared training helps improve coordination and preparedness across emergency services. The college also has close links with Portlinculla University Hospital, giving students exposure to hospital-based care and strengthening connections between pre-hospital and hospital services.

A Boost for Ballinasloe

Beyond education, NASC brings clear benefits to the town itself. The college supports local employment, while students contribute to the local economy through accommodation, food,



National Ambulance Service: Students on the first morning of their induction at the college, pictured with Robert Morton, Director of the National Ambulance Service. PD32B commenced their training programme in early January.

transport, and retail spending during their training. Over the years, strong relationships have developed between the college and local businesses and services. Students frequently comment on the friendly, supportive atmosphere in Ballinasloe. The town's quieter setting, combined with good transport links via the M6 motorway and rail services, makes it a practical and welcoming place to train. Many trainees say the sense of community helps them focus on what is an intense and demanding course.

Looking Ahead

With plans to expand training capacity nationally and invest further in simulation and digital learning, NASC Ballinasloe is set to remain a key part of Ireland's emergency care system. Nearly two decades after opening, the campus continues to combine national importance with strong local roots, playing a vital role in training the paramedics who serve communities across the country.

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Restoration Of Full Maternity Services Update

By Colm Croffy



Portiuncula University Hospital

The Portiuncula Maternity Alliance continue to campaign for the full restoration of all maternity services to Portiuncula University Hospital (PUH). This follows the decision taken last year to move the care of women whose pregnancies were deemed "high risk" to either University Hospital Galway (UHG) or another unit chosen by the mother.

Bernard Gloster, the current CEO of the HSE, confirmed at a recent meeting of the Oireachtas Health Committee that there are no plans to downgrade maternity services at the hospital. However, he declined to give a timeline for the restoration of full services, saying that reviews and improvements under the National Women and Infants Health Programme are ongoing.

Shortly after Mr Gloster's appearance at the committee, the results of a Nationwide Maternity Experience Survey 2025 were released that showed the maternity unit in Portiuncula is very highly rated by patients. Of the 202 women invited to participate for the PUH survey, 99 responded, giving a response rate of 49%. This was above the national average of 42%. A total of 84% of respondents reported a good or very good overall experience at PUH, higher than the national average of 83%.

The survey results also show Portiuncula scoring above both national and Saolta Group averages across antenatal care, labour and birth, postnatal care, breastfeeding support, and neonatal care. (The Saolta Group comprises public hospitals in the west and north-west region).

In antenatal care, Portiuncula outperformed University Hospital Galway, with patients reporting strong communication, respect, dignity and confidence in care. In scores for care during labour and birth by maternity service, Portiuncula was marked 8.3 out of 10, exactly the national average, and above UHG's score of 7.9.

Cllr Evelyn Parsons said the findings: "sharply challenge the ongoing downgrading of services at PUH" and raise serious questions about the rationale for diverting women from the hospital. She added that these results highlighted the need for the release of: "hard data and written evidence" to explain why the decision had been made to: "effectively downgrade" services locally.

"To make any change to a maternity service, which is obviously a very important service, the evidence and data supporting that change should be made public," Cllr Parsons added, noting that Portiuncula also scored highest in the region in the 2020 survey, showing a "consistency" in care.



L-R Cllr Geraldine Donohue, Carmel Greally, Senator Shane Curley, Cllr Evelyn Parsons, Cllr Alan Harney

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From Goa to Ballinasloe: A Young Chef's Journey

By Colm Croffy

Elicio Antonio Fernandes is a 22-year-old who grew up in a small village in Goa, India. From a young age, food was at the heart of his life—not just as nourishment, but as a way to bring people together.

That passion led him to study a BSc in International Hospitality Management at VM Salgaocar College, where he gained a strong foundation in culinary skills, service standards, strong knowledge about hospitality and global hospitality practices.

Today, he is continuing his journey in Ballinasloe, where he currently works as a chef at the Shearwater Hotel & Spa. "This town has given me invaluable opportunities to grow, learn, and contribute to the local hospitality scene, and for that I am deeply grateful," he states.

Previously, during his time as a chef at Tee 19 Restaurant at Ballinasloe Golf Club, he had the opportunity to plan and execute two successful themed dining events: Indian Night and Indian-Chinese Night.

These wonderful culinary events were carefully planned from concept to execution. Seeing a sold-out restaurant and welcoming guests from near and far was an unforgettable experience. "It showed me very much that the local community is open to new flavours, cultural experiences, and creative ideas when they are delivered with



Elicio Antonio Fernandes



Chicken Tandoor

care and respect," Elicio explains.

He attributes these successes to teamwork. "I was fortunate to work alongside an excellent kitchen team, including Jacinta Cooney, our talented dessert chef, and chef Ivo, whose support was essential throughout the events. I also sought guidance from local Irish chef Gary Murphy, whose expertise helped me understand local tastes and expectations, ensuring the menus appealed to a wide audience. None of this would have been possible without the encouragement and trust of Bernie Dolan and Frankie Kenny, who ran Tee 19 up to very recently with passion and belief in young talent," he recalls.

For Elicio, his journey is about more than cooking—it is about learning, sharing knowledge, and giving back. As a young chef building a career in Ireland, he strongly believes in supporting others who want to gain experience in hospitality or organise community food events.

"I am always happy to help local businesses, young people, or anyone seeking advice. When a town supports young talent, it creates opportunity for everyone. Through collaboration, creativity, and shared ambition, Ballinasloe can continue to grow—one plate, one event, and one community at a time," says our Goa-born, busy and skilled chef!!

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Christmas Eve Carols Raise €11,900

By Maria Connolly



Members of St. Michael's Church Folk Choir at the cheque presentation to the nominated charities, held in Gullane's Hotel.

Services and The Samaritans with the proceeds handed over at a function in Gullanes Hotel.

To date, through the years, over €124,000.00 has been collected and donated to local organisations, as the local choirs are supported by groups and singers from the surrounding areas.

Local artistes and many more songsters contributed on the day, while the support on the ground by Tomás Gullane, his staff and others for providing refreshments was much appreciated.

Once again, on Christmas Eve, the streets of the town were filled with the strains of wonderful carol singing organised by St. Michael's Folk Choir.

The traditional afternoon began with a one hour extravaganza by the Town Band, before a combination of choirs, singers and others offered a medley of festive entertainment. Thanks to the generosity of the townspeople and surrounding areas €11,900.00 was collected by volunteers, who were on the principal streets and key roundabouts from early morning.

This money has been divided between Ballinasloe Social

A spokesman for the Folk Group thanked all involved on making the day such a success. "Every year the people give generously towards our fundraising and we appreciate it very much."



Sean Óg Hurley (Chair of St. Michael's Church Folk Choir), Michael Lally (Chair of Ballinasloe Social Services), Teresa Coughlan (Manager, Social Services), and Miriam Maloney (Social Services).



Peter Ryan (St. Michael's Church Folk Choir), Kerstin Fossum (Regional Manager, Samaritans), and Anne Jordan (St. Michael's Church Folk Choir).

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Town's Capital Funds Balance Confirmed

By Colm Croffy

There was clarity and some good news for townspeople, with formal updates on the status and size of the residual monies set aside by the old Town Council in 2014 and transferred, with restrictions, to the County at the time of the merger.

At the pre-Christmas MDC, there was fulsome support from all Councillors for a detailed notice of motion question to County Management on the restricted landfill receipted money, which at one stage in 2012 topped €22 million.

Earmarked with the consent of both councils were the Town Enhancement Scheme (€2.5m), the development of the new Library (€4m), the Townparks Recreational Area (€0.5m), the Townparks Inner Relief Road (€1.6m) and, in addition to the four projects above, a Community Grants Fund of €1.3m was also established, with funding provided to sporting and community groups in the town. This totals €9.9 million.

The balance of the fund had to be set aside as part of a High Court order, which contracted the Town Council and Galway County Council, invigilated by the EPA, to pay for the annualised care, maintenance and remediation of the old town dump for a period of 24 years, which is thought to expire in the early 30s (the landfill closed in 2005). Part of the remediation process includes the Poolboy Landfill Amenity and Recreational Park, the final plans for which were launched in October 2024.

When one looks at what the allocations seed-funded or part-paid for – as well as the Town Hall Theatre roof, the Duggan Park lights, scores of playground upgrades, refits and capital upgrades to the Emerald, the Social Services Centre, club buildings, equipment



FRONT ROW: Cllr. Ml Connolly, Cllr. D Connolly. BACK ROW: Cllr. P. Keavney, Cllr. D. E Parsons, Cllr A Harney, Cllr. D Geraghty

for voluntary organisations, etc., etc. – it represents a significant windfall of investment for the last two decades.

The Town Enhancement Scheme cost over €8 million; the Convent purchase and Library development cost near €5.5 million, with the Blueway ORIS study to help plan and develop the huge garden sweeping down to the river to create leisure points and a blue walkway to the rear of Main St. Departmental schemes and some

EU funding were used to address the shortfall.

The Townparks Recreational Area project has not begun and, sadly, the Townparks Inner Relief Road from behind the library to the back of Gullanes Hotel is no further on than when the first zonings to accommodate it and plans were drawn up in the late 90s.

To be fair to the Management team, they have assured the area Councillors that these two projects remain outstanding, with monies ring-fenced as referenced in the motion. Critically, both projects remain included as objectives of the Current Development Plan, comprising €1.6 million for the Inner Relief Rd and €500,000 for the new Recreational Area.

Critically, the CEO confirmed that the amounts can be used to seek match funding from a variety of Government or European schemes.

With the establishment of the Council's Project Office, the Councillors are hoping that the organisational capacity to deliver major projects, and the clarification from the Executive, will allow these final elements of the merger of Town and County to be realised within the lifetime of this Council.

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Christmas Fundraising Success

By Maria Connolly



Members and volunteers of the Clontuskert Charity Concert Committee present a cheque to Teresa Coughlan and Dr. Connolly of Ballinasloe Social Services.

The people of Ballinasloe and surrounding districts have always been pleased to support charitable causes at Christmas, and 2025 was no exception, with some of the totals raised being among the highest ever received.

The biggest success was the town's Christmas Jumper Day, which raised over €13,300. Half of the money received will go to Galway Hospice, and the other half will go to Ballinasloe Social Services.

Next highest was the Folk Choir Christmas Eve event – see piece on separate page!

The annual Clontuskert Community Christmas Concert also collected a bumper sum. €9,000 was received, which will be split equally between three organisations: East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support, Eyrecourt Social Services, and Ballinasloe Social Services.

Rachel Goode's concert, "The Magic of Christmas", is a staple of the town's Christmas fundraising calendar. In 2025, the concert brought in €3,453 for East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre. Another fundraising concert also took place, with the town band

appearing with St Brigid's Community Choir, Kiltoom, and the junior band. Their concert raised €1,000 for the Children's Unit in PUH.

GAA clubs are known for their community support, and Ballinasloe GAA hosted two fundraising events over the holiday season. The Gaelic 4 Mothers & Others kickabout raised €400, as did the St Stephen's Day charity game. Proceeds from both games will go to East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support.

Padraig Pearse also supported two charities through their Christmas fundraising. Their 'Trad for Trocaire' evening was one of three fundraisers held for the Greater Ballinasloe Gaza Syria Turkey Appeal. In total, the events raised €11,668. On Christmas Day, the club hosted the GOAL Mile, which raised €1,226 in total. Antoinette Gallagher, who organised the GOAL event and worked tirelessly behind the scenes, and Tom Corbett, who instigated the Trad for Trocaire fundraiser, were warmly thanked by the committees.

The Brothers of Charity held their annual sale of work in the Shearwater Hotel, with proceeds going towards the supported living houses in the town. It is estimated that the event raised €3,000-€4,000.

St Vincent de Paul thanked everyone who donated to their Christmas appeals or left donations of goods in the shop; they were delighted with the response. (The charity does not make figures raised through their December campaigns public.)



Lions Club Food Hampers, with member Stephen Kerr co-ordinating

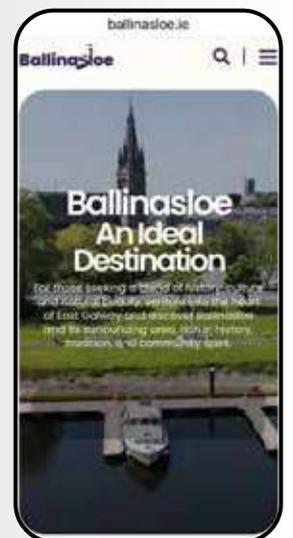
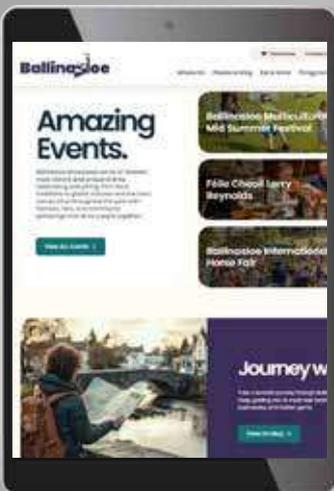
In terms of other supports, the Lions Club provided vital assistance to families and individuals with support from SURMODICS for Christmas 2025 through its annual Food Hamper Project. In response to ongoing social and economic hardship locally, 175 food hampers (200kg of food) were distributed on December 19, each containing essential and seasonal food items.

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10 Погляди на українців та їхню країну

By Julia Prystupa

Коли українські родини почали прибувати до міста та околиць, багато місцевих жителів не були впевнені, чого очікувати. Заголовки малювали картину війни та переміщення, але за цими історіями стояли реальні люди - батьки, діти, робітники та мрійники - кожен зі своєю подорожжю. З часом через чати біля воріт школи, громадські заходи та спільні страви з'явилася чіткіша та глибша картина. Ось десять речей, які зараз широко розуміють про українців в Ірландії та країні, яку вони називають домом.



Українські діти відвідують ринок у Кліфдені, щоб відсвяткувати День незалежності України

Ukrainian children attending a market in Clifden to celebrate Independence Day in Ukraine, some are local youngsters involved with Youth Reach Club in locality!

1. Стьйкість - друга природа. Українці несуть тиху силу. Багато хто пережив неймовірні втрати, але вони залишаються обнадійливими, рішучими та глибоко вкоріненими у своїй ідентичності. Їх здатність перебудовуватися, навіть у незнайомому оточенні, не що інше, як надихає.
2. Сім'я священна. Незалежно від того, розділені кордонами чи зібрані за обіднім столом, родинні зв'язки міцні. Почуття обов'язку перед близькими непохитне і глибоко відчутне.
3. Освіта є пріоритетом. Українські батьки беруть активну участь у навчанні своїх дітей. Вони цінують знання та заохочують цікавість, навіть орієнтуючись на нову мову та незнайомі шкільні системи.
4. Традиція має значення. Від вишиванок до народних пісень українці з гордістю відзначають свою спадщину. Культурні заходи та обміни в місті принесли колорит, музику та тепло в місцеві простори.
5. Їжа - міст. Ділитися борщем, варениками чи іншими традиційними стравами - це не лише харчування; це про

зв'язок. Страви щедрі, домашні, і часто приходять з історіями, які охоплюють покоління.

6. Внесок є ключовим. Українці шукають не просто притулку - вони шукають мету. Багато хто приєднався до місцевих ініціатив, був волонтером і пропонував свої навички громаді, прагнучи повернути отриману щедрість.
7. Їх історія нашарована. Минуле України складне, формується імперіями, революціями, запеклою боротьбою за незалежність. Слухання їхніх

історій пропонує глибше розуміння стійкості, культури та національної гордості.

8. Віра пропонує комфорт. Чи то православні, чи католицькі, чи світські, багато українців черпають силу з духовних традицій, особливо в часи невизначеності та переходу.
9. Вони швидко вчаться. Від оволодіння англійською мовою до навігації в ірландській бюрократії, українці адаптуються з вражаючою швидкістю та рішучістю, часто допомагаючи один одному на цьому шляху.
10. Доброта запам'ятовується. Маленькі жести - підйомник до магазину, теплий прийом - ніколи не забуваються. Вдячність висловлюється щиро і часто, зміцнюючи зв'язки між громадами.

Вітаючи українців, Баллінасло отримав більше, ніж нових мешканців; воно набуло нових перспектив, дружби та глибшого почуття спільної людяності. Будемо сподіватися, що у 2026 році і місцеві, і українці продовжують поглиблювати дружбу та зв'язки.

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140 New Houses Planned For Town

By Colm Croffy

Permission is being sought for two significant housing developments in town for nearly 140 new homes.

One is aiming to build 74 new homes at Dunlo, and the other 63 units at Kilgarve.

The larger of the two projects is led by Limehill Esker Claregalway (same company who undertook the modern scheme to the left of Tesco), which plans to build 74 new homes at a site off Harbour Road, backing onto the existing Meadowbrook estates.

It is proposed to be a mix of detached and semi-detached homes, in a mix of two, three, and four-bed units, group car parking with electricity charging points, communal recreational space, as well as small private gardens. New roadways, pathways, and cycleways into the town centre are being proposed.

Meanwhile, Brackenside Investment LTD is looking for permission to build 63 homes at a site that would be accessed through the existing Rath Glas estate off the R357 (Portnick Road). These would be a mix of single, two, three, and four-bed units, and the project would be advanced in two phases, the first involving 40 homes.

County planners will make a decision on both projects in February.

It is believed that owing to a change of County Housing Policy in the last few months, some of these new homes may be available to first-time buyers under the Affordable Housing Scheme, Shared Equity Scheme, and the Help to Buy Scheme.

The Affordable Housing Scheme for first-time buyers is where the local authority takes a percentage stake in your home that covers the reduction in price. So, if you buy the home at a 20% discount, the local authority will have a 20% stake in your home.

You must buy back the local authority's stake after 40 years or if you sell your home, but you can repay it at any time before this. You must be over 18 years of age and have the right to live indefinitely in Ireland.



Architectural impression of the proposed estate behind Meadowbrook.

Your income must be below a certain level. Your "Purchasing Power", which is your gross annual income multiplied by four, must be less than 85.5% of the open market value of the affordable home.

Or you must have proof from a bank or financial institution that you cannot get a mortgage for 85.5% of the market value of the home.

While the scheme is aimed at first-time buyers, there are exceptions, such as if you previously owned a home but no longer have a financial interest in it due to divorce or bankruptcy.

The income assessed is gross income. Your qualification is based on a calculation of your preceding 12 months' gross average income prior to the date of receipt of application. The income of all the persons making the application shall be assessed.

The housing authority may disregard income sources that are one-off, temporary, or short-term. This can include certain social welfare payments.

The advice from most Housing Help organisations is for couples or buyers to have their mortgage approval in principle obtained well in advance of applying for any of these schemes to help you buy a home.



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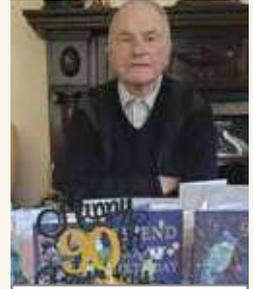
By Maria Connolly

Derrymullen native and Cleaghmore resident, Sean Keeley, recently celebrated the milestone of his 90th birthday.

Seán was only 20 years of age when he won an All-Ireland medal with Galway in 1956 when they defeated Cork in the final. Seán played practically the entire game with a broken jaw after incurring the injury in the early minutes. 2026 also marks the 70th anniversary of that All-Ireland victory. Seán continued to play with Galway into the 1960s, adding a national league victory over Kerry in 1957 and 6 Connacht medals to his list of achievements.

After retiring from inter-county football, Seán was a keen amateur golfer and an active member of Ballinasloe Golf Club for many years along with his wife, Ronnie. Birthday celebrations were held in Cleaghmore with his wife, Ronnie, sons, Des and Cormac, and many good neighbours and friends.

Numerous birthday wishes were received in the form of cards, calls, texts and visitors to the house. Seán was also delighted to receive video messages from current Galway players Conor Gleeson, Seán Kelly, John Maher, Damien Comer and Cillian McDaid, and former Galway player Barry Brennan. John Purcell, son of legendary Galway footballer Seán Purcell (who was a friend of Seán's and a teammate in the 1956 final), also sent a video message. Ciarán Kilkenny, a current Dublin player who is related to Seán Purcell, also sent a video. And just before he left Dubai, a message was recorded by none other than RTE sports commentator Marty Morrissey, who wished Seán the very best and hoped he might throw a 'Marty Party' in the future.



Sean Keeley

Killalaghton Drama Annual Play

Killalaghton Drama performing their annual three-act play on February 6, 7, and 8 at 8:30pm in the local Hall.

The hilarious *Fortunes and Misfortunes* by Jimmy Keary is the presentation. Having lost her job in a cafe, Daisy Fortune starts housekeeping for Bill and Oonagh Delaney. Oonagh is organising a poetry workshop, and there is tension in her marriage as a result of her husband's flirting with Wanda Hunt. When Oonagh's fruit punch is accidentally laced with alcohol, the workshop turns into a complete disaster and the tension between Oonagh and Wanda explodes.

All tickets are available online only. They can be ordered through: gr8events.ie. For all other enquiries, please contact 087 413 8957.



The Cast **BACK ROW (L TO R):** Martin Broderick, Hannah Daly, Shane Dolphin, Eoin Clarke, Peter Gallaher and Sean Dillion. **FRONT ROW (L TO R):** Anne Sinclair, Mary Carr, Margaret Sheppard, Laura Madden and Deirdre Headd.

Salmons Arts & Crafting Classes Continue

Art classes from Michaela McCarroll take place every Saturday from 11am-12.30pm on the top floor of Salmon's Department Store.

Suitable for all levels - drawing, painting, how to build a composition, colour mixing and trying out different materials will all be covered.

Small class sizes and a friendly atmosphere are guaranteed. €20 per person, with basic materials provided.

Attendees can contact Michaela directly on 089 845 232; via WhatsApp;

or by SMS. Instagram: @michaelamccarrollart.

A free Art & Craft Demo Day for all ages will take place on February 21. Pop in and join the fun any time between 2pm-5pm. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Customers can try products including Eugu, Posca and Hey Clay. Other classes to be rolled out over spring include ceramics and knitting. Check their Instagram and Facebook pages for more information in the coming weeks.

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Newtown NS take on Asian Hornet

By Maria Connolly



Pupils at Newtown National School displaying preserved Asian hornets



Newtown National School: A pupil studying the Asian hornet as part of their Science Blast project



Pupils at Newtown NS with examples of the Asian hornet.

Pupils at Newtown National School are turning their attention to one of Ireland's most serious emerging environmental threats as part of a Science Blast 2026 project.

The project, which will be showcased at Science Blast in March 2026, sees pupils researching the Asian hornet, an invasive species that poses a significant risk to bees, other pollinators, and biodiversity. Through hands-on science activities, models, and investigations, the children are learning how the hornet can be identified, why it is dangerous, and what can be done to raise public awareness.

Science Blast is a nationwide STEM initiative that encourages primary school pupils to explore real-world scientific problems through inquiry and experimentation. The project links science learning directly to environmental protection and community awareness.

One of the dedicated pupils involved in the project said:

"We learned how the Asian hornet can harm bees and other insects. We want people to know how to recognise it and why it's important to protect nature."

Mr Ó Leocháin, teacher and beekeeper, said: "This project gives pupils the opportunity to engage with a real environmental issue affecting Ireland today. They are developing scientific skills while also learning how science can help communities respond to challenges like invasive species."

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Camcloon NS Enrolling for September 2026

By Maria Connolly

Camcloon National School is buzzing with energy, creativity, and community spirit as it continues to grow, innovate, and celebrate learning at every level.

From vibrant, child-centred classrooms to expanding digital literacy initiatives, outdoor learning spaces, and inclusive supports for every child, the school caters to all, while keeping that small, family-like atmosphere.

There are three mainstream classrooms and one classroom for autistic students.



The junior infants at Camcloon National School

“Our school’s pupils thrive in an environment where curiosity is encouraged, talents are nurtured, and every child is known, valued, and supported. With a dedicated staff, a welcoming community, and a commitment to providing the very best start in education, Camcloon National School is a wonderful place to learn and belong. The school also has a Morning and Afterschool Club, operated on-site by Helen Glynn c/o Clonark Childcare,” states Principal Katie Feehily.



Ms. Louise Gallagher (Deputy Principal and Senior Room Teacher) with 6th Class pupils at Camcloon National School

The school warmly invites all prospective parents and students to their Open Evening on Tuesday, February 10, from 6.30–7.30 pm. Come explore the school, meet the team, ask questions, and discover what makes Camcloon National School such a special place.

Enrolments for September 2026 are now open, and the school would love to welcome your children into their community. Forms can be downloaded from the school website at www.camcloonns.ie, through the school office, and will be available to collect at the Open Evening on February 10.

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Selling in 2026 Starts With Preparation

If you are considering selling a property in 2026, the most important work often happens before a For Sale board goes up. Early preparation, professional advice and the right team behind you can make a significant difference to both timing and outcome.

One of the first areas to review is documentation and compliance. Matters such as Local Property Tax status, planning history, boundaries and certificates can take time to clarify. Addressing these issues early helps prevent delays once a sale is agreed and gives buyers confidence from the outset.

Speaking with your solicitor in advance of marketing is another step that is often underestimated. Early legal input allows contracts to be prepared in good time and helps identify any title or boundary matters before a buyer is found.

Pricing and strategy are also key considerations. An accurate, evidence based valuation, grounded in recent comparable sales and local market insight, ensures a property enters the market with a realistic and well considered pricing approach.

Once a sale is agreed, buyer qualification and communication become equally important. Not all interest is equal, and clear timelines, regular follow up and coordination between agents, solicitors and clients are essential to protecting the transaction through to completion.

At Sheehy Meares Real Estate, we advise clients at every stage of this process. Our team operates from offices in Ballinasloe, Roscommon and Athlone, with additional presence in Galway and Dublin. With over 200 years of combined experience across residential sales, commercial property, valuations, compliance and property management, we understand both the market and the detail behind every transaction.

Our role is to guide, protect and deliver for our clients, ensuring sales are handled professionally from valuation through to keys handed over.

If you are selling in 2026, now is the right time to start the conversation.

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Ballinasloe Rugby Football Club 150th Anniversary Re-Union Function



Pearse Keller, Tom Waters, Tom Horkan



Enda Lohan, Geraldine Kelly, Liam Courtney



Micheal O'Hehir, Gearoid Geraghty, Brian Lynch



Seamus Ryan, Niall Hogan, Noel Mannion



Anraoi Finnegan, John Glynn, Gerry Mansfield



Matt Carey, Jacinta Divilly, Michael Kelly



Padge Finn, Jackie Treacy, John Gilmore



Liam Keane, John Doolin, Gerry Fitzgerald



Anne Marie Waters, Mary Carey, Margaret Mansfield, Fiona Mannion



Andrew Mannion, John Kelly, Brendan Glynn, Godfrey Gibbons



Maire Hughes, Cathy Keller, Mary Courtney, Maria Finnegan



Pictured at the Ballinasloe RFC Presidents & Captains Re-Union Function in the Clubhouse, marking the club's 150th anniversary, were past club presidents.
FRONT ROW (L-R): Enda Lohan (1983/1985, 1994/1995), John Glynn (2000/2001), Geraldine Kelly (2011/2013), Gerry Mansfield (1982/1983).
BACK ROW: Matt Carey (2004/2005), Tom Waters (2019/2022), John Doolin (2013/2015), Liam Courtney (2015/2017), Anraoi Finnegan (1985/1987), Tom Horkan (2017/2019), Pearse Keller (2022/2024).



Huge congratulations to Tommy & Eilish Sheridan who celebrated their 65th Wedding Anniversary in Gullanes Hotel earlier in the early of January.



Some members of the Ballinasloe Local Knitting Club at their festive meet up in Gullanes Hotel



Prize Draw Winner
Congratulations to BCU December Prize Draw winner, Sean Madden pictured here receiving his €20,000 prize with Maura Jennings from BCU



Ballinasloe CC's Alice Maloney, who finished second in the U14 Girls race at the National Cyclocross Series in Ballinasloe, which was sponsored by Ballinasloe Credit Union.

Credit Union – Art Competition

Congratulations to all of our Credit Union Art Competition winners, U5, U6 & U8-10 category winners are pictured with Adjudicator Maura Ward & Sean, Shane & Niall from Ballinasloe Credit Union



Pictured are two members of the committee, Tommy Brennan and Brendan Kelly, past pupils of Garbally College and members of the Leaving Certificate class of 1975, who recently marked 50 years since their graduation. As part of their half-century celebration, they raised €1,500 for local charities and institutions.

The beneficiaries, which each received €500, were St Teresa's Special School, East Galway/ Midlands Cancer Support, and Ballinasloe Social Services. The reunion took place in October and included golf, historical visits, and a celebratory dinner at Gullane's Hotel.



8-10 Category Winners



U5 Category Winners



Sr Annette Farrell, Pat and Saoirse Johnston and Monica Hough attending Christmas plays in Creagh NS.



At last month's Stripe Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition, Clodagh Parkin, Niamh O'Sullivan and Aoife Cregg, of St Mary's Secondary School, Mallow, Co Cork, took first place in the senior group social and behavioural sciences category for their project "Pixelated Realities: When Social Media Becomes the Escape". Two of three Cork schoolgirls have Ballinasloe connections. Aoife is the daughter of the late Eamon Cregg, and granddaughter of Tom and Nancy Cregg of Deerpark, while her friend Clodagh's grandfather is Michael Jennings, formerly of Society Street. Well done to all three winners!



Pictured are Ms. Deirdre Fenton's 1st class at Scoil an Chroi Naofa, practising their Bingo skills for the school's upcoming fundraiser. Family Fun Bingo will take place on March 6 in the Emerald Ballroom. Doors open 6.45pm, and all the family are welcome. There are lots of prizes to be won! Tickets are on sale soon.



Tom Cregg celebrating his 90th Birthday with his wife Nancy at the "official" party in the Ballinasloe Social Services lately



Retired Nurses Annual Christmas Dinner in Gullanes Hotel

FEBRUARY EVENTS GUIDE

February 1, Sunday

Social Dancing: Andy Feery	4.30pm - 7pm	Shearwater Hotel
Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Sharon Shannon & band	6pm - 1am	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
Country Dancing: David James	8.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
String Ninjas	10pm	An Tain Bar
Grapevine	10pm	Brewery Lane
Boogiemem	10pm	Joe's Bar

February 2, Monday

Knitting Group	10:00 - 11:00am	Gullanes Hotel
Children w/ add.needs SupGrp	10.30am	Fam & Comm Resource Ctr
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 3, Tuesday

Breastfeeding SupGrp	10am-11.30am	Youth Work, Marina Point
Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Walking Club	10.30am - 12.30pm	Running Track , Brackernagh
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 4, Wednesday

French Conversation	11 am - 12 pm	Gullanes Hotel
Social Bridge	11 am-1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby and Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret. AGM	3pm	Gullanes Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Kids BJJ	5pm - 5.45pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 5, Thursday

Yoga w/ Ju	10 am - 11 am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Bsloe Active Ret Singing Class	10.30am-12.30pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Ciorcal Comhrá	11 m - 12 pm	Gullanes Hotel
International Women's Group	11.15 am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Pillar House Trad Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Traditional Music	9.30pm	Fallons Bar

February 6, Friday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
Shared Reading Bookclub	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Fortunes & Misfortunes by Killalaghton Drama	Curtain at 8.30pm	Killalaghton Hall
Down the Road	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar
The John Molloy Dance Weekend	TBC	Shearwater Hotel

February 7, Saturday

Fortunes & Misfortunes by Killalaghton Drama	Curtain at 8.30pm	Killalaghton Hall
Live Music	Evening	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
The CEOs	10pm	Brewery Lane
Joe Flynn	10pm	Joe's Bar
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
The Variant	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Live Music	10pm	Millars Bar, Ballydangan
The John Molloy Dance Weekend	TBC	Shearwater Hotel

February 8, Sunday

Fortunes & Misfortunes by Killalaghton Drama	Curtain at 8.30pm	Killalaghton Hall
Andy Feery	3pm - 5.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
John Molly	5.30pm - 7.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Country Dancing: Jimmy Buckley	8.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
The John Molloy Dance Weekend	TBC	Shearwater Hotel

February 9, Monday

Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 10, Tuesday

Bsloe Active Ret Walking Club	10.30am - 12.30pm	Running Track , Brackernagh
Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 11, Wednesday

Bsloe Active Ret Singing Class	10.30am-12.30pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Social Bridge	11am-1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Baby and Toddler Rhyme Time w/ Music Generation	11:30am	Bsloe Library
Golden Years Book Club	11.30am	Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Kids BJJ	5pm - 5.45pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 12, Thursday

Yoga w/ Ju	10 am - 11 am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Love Songs & Poetry Lunchtime Concert	1pm - 2pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Pillar House Trad Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Traditional Music	9.30pm	Fallons Bar

February 13, Friday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

February 14, Saturday

The Highstool Prophets Live	8.30pm - 10.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
Live Music	Evening	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
Red Tape	10pm	Brewery Lane
Dave Mills	10pm	Joe's Bar
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Joe Gibbons	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Michael Sexton	9pm - 12am	Pádraig Pearse's GAA
Live Music	10pm	Millars Bar, Ballydangan
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar

February 15, Sunday

Sunday Dancing: Liam Mannering	5pm - 7.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Sunday Dancing: Ciaran Rosney	7.30pm - 10pm	Shearwater Hotel

February 16, Monday

Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 17, Tuesday

Bsloe Active Ret Walking Club	10.30am - 12.30pm	Running Track , Brackernagh
Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 18, Wednesday

Social Bridge	11am-1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Baby and Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
Citizens Information	10am - 4pm	Fam & Comm Resource Ctr
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Kids BJJ	5pm - 5.45pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 19, Thursday

Yoga w/ Ju	10 am - 11 am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Bsloe Active Ret Singing Class	10.30am-12.30pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
The Stations by Clontuskurt Drama	Curtain at 8pm	St Catherine's Hall, Aughrim
Pillar House Trad Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Traditional Music	9.30pm	Fallons Bar

February 20, Friday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
The Stations by Clontuskurt Drama	Curtain at 8pm	St Catherine's Hall, Aughrim
Jukebox John	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

February 21, Saturday

Live Music	Evening	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
The Stations by Clontuskurt Drama	Curtain at 8pm	St Catherine's Hall, Aughrim
Mike Denver Dance Weekend	Doors open 8pm	Shearwater Hotel
Ye Vagabonds	8pm - 11pm	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
3 Men & a Bass	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Live Music	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Double Bill	10pm	Joe's Bar
Live Music	10pm	Millars Bar, Ballydangan
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar

February 22, Sunday

Social Dancing: Stephen Smyth	4.30pm - 7pm	Shearwater Hotel
Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Mike Denver Dance Weekend	8pm	Shearwater Hotel

February 23, Monday

Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 24, Tuesday

Bsloe Active Ret Walking Club	10.30am - 12.30pm	Running Track , Brackernagh
Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 25, Wednesday

Social Bridge	11am-1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Baby and Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Kids BJJ	5pm - 5.45pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

February 26, Thursday

Yoga w/ Ju	10 am - 11 am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Bsloe Active Ret Singing Class	10.30am-12.30pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Pillar House Trad Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Traditional Music	9.30pm	Fallons Bar

February 27, Friday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
Robbie	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

February 28, Saturday

Get Lost in a Good Book' Story Time	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Live Music	Evening	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
DJ Colm	10pm	Brewery Lane
Tongue & Groove	10pm	Joe's Bar
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Katie Henshaw & Mike Flynn	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Live Music	10pm	Millars Bar, Ballydangan
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar

MARCH EVENTS GUIDE

March 1, Sunday

Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Landslide	10pm	Joe's Bar

March 2, Monday

Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am -12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am -12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Knitting Group	10 am - 11 am	Gullanes Hotel
Children w/ additi.l needs SupGrp	10.30am	Fam & Comm Resource Ctr
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 3, Tuesday

Breastfeeding SupGrp	10am-11.30am	Youth Work, Marina Point
Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 4, Wednesday

French Conversation	11 am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Social Bridge	11am-1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby and Toddler Rhyme Time w/ Music Generation	11:30am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Kids BJJ	5pm - 5.45pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 5, Thursday

Bsloe Active Ret Singing Class	10.30am-12.30pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Ciorcal Comhrá	11 am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
International Women's Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Pillar House Trad Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Traditional Music	9.30pm	Fallons Bar

March 6, Friday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler and Baby Group	10:30am	Fam & Comm Resource Ctr
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
Down the Road	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

March 7, Saturday

Live Music	Evening	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
Red Tape	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Live Music	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Split the G	10pm	Joe's Bar

March 8, Sunday

Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Trevor Kavanagh	7pm	Joe's Bar

March 9, Monday

Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am -12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am -12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 10, Tuesday

Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Cheltenham Festival	10am - 5.30pm	Joe's Bar
March 11, Wednesday		
Social Bridge	11am-1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Golden Years Book Club	11.30am	Library

Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Kids BJJ	5pm - 5.45pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom
Cheltenham Festival	10am - 5.30pm	Joe's Bar

March 12, Thursday

Bsloe Active Ret Singing Class	10.30am-12.30pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Pillar House Trad Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Traditional Music	9.30pm	Fallons Bar
Cheltenham Festival	10am - 5.30pm	Joe's Bar

March 13, Friday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
Adam & Sean	10pm	Brewery Lane
Dan McCabe	8pm	Shearwater Hotel
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar
Cheltenham Festival	10am - 5.30pm	Joe's Bar

March 14, Saturday

Live Music	Evening	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
Grapevine	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Live Music	10pm	Millars Bar, Ballydangan
Tongue & Groove	10pm	Joe's Bar

March 15, Sunday

Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Trevor Cavanagh	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Joe Flynn	7pm	Joe's Bar

March 16, Monday

Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am-12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am-12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 17, Tuesday

Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Saint Patrick's Day Parade	2pm	Town Center
The CEOs	6pm	Brewery Lane
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Trad Session	4pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Live Music	7pm	Joe's Bar

March 18, Wednesday

Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Citizens Information	10am - 4pm	Fam & Comm Resource Ctr
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Kids BJJ	5pm - 5.45pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 19, Thursday

Bsloe Active Ret Singing Class	10.30am-12.30pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Pillar House Trad Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Traditional Music	9.30pm	Fallons Bar

March 20, Friday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
Robbie	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

March 21, Saturday

Live Music	Evening	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
3 Men & A Bass	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
The Variant	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Live Music	10pm	Millars Bar, Ballydangan
Dave Mills	10pm	Joe's Bar

March 22, Sunday

Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Double Bill	7pm	Joe's Bar

March 23, Monday

Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am -12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am -12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 24, Tuesday

Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 25, Wednesday

Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Kids BJJ	5pm - 5.45pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 26, Thursday

Bsloe Active Ret Singing Class	10.30am -12.30pm	Bsloe Town Band Hall
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Mike Denver & Guests	8pm	Shearwater Hotel
Pillar House Trad Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Traditional Music	9.30pm	Fallons Bar

March 27, Friday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Indoor Country Market	9am - 1pm	Social Services Centre
Pa Shiel	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

March 28, Saturday

Live Music	Evening	Lukers Bar, Sbridge
3 Men & A Bass	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Kevin Barrett	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Live Music	10pm	Millars Bar, Ballydangan
Shane Moore	10pm	Joe's Bar

March 29, Sunday

Live Trad & Folk session	6pm	An Tain Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Boogie Men	7pm	Joe's Bar

March 30, Monday

Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am -12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret. Bowling	10.30am -12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom Bsloe
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu	6pm - 7pm	The Kings Court Acad.
Kickboxing	7pm - 8pm	The Kings Court Acad.
IKKI Karate	7pm - 9pm	Emerald Ballroom

March 31, Tuesday

Learn English w/ Fáilte Isteach	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Bsloe Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Bsloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

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CARO Trainees Deliver Project For Local Estates

By Colm Croffy

In October 2025, Yvonne Hoary from Galway Rural Development reached out to the local Caro team about a community event for two local estates.

The Caro Community Care Team are part of the Brothers of Charity Services in the locality.

They needed 50 window boxes filled and planted, 20 bird feeders, and "Loan Libraries," where people can exchange old books. The Caro team worked closely with the Maintenance Department to prepare a quote, which was accepted, allowing them to offer paid work to five trainees at their centre.

They outsourced the creation of the Loan Libraries to Padraic O'Brien, who dedicated his weekends to working on them. The rest of the project was completed in Caro's new workshop.

Once everything was finished, the five trainees took on the task of painting and varnishing the bird feeders and window boxes. The Loan Libraries required a bit of an artistic touch, but they were fortunate to have their dear colleague Mark Kenny step in to paint them.

When the pieces were complete, Yvonne arranged for 150 plants and compost to be delivered to Caro on the morning of Storm Bram. Not even a storm could stop the Caro team, and every plant was successfully potted into the hand-crafted window boxes.

On December 10th, the completed items were presented at the Shearwater Hotel. Yvonne thanked the Caro group for all their hard work, and James Murphy the Caro Supervisor had the



LEFT TO RIGHT: Padraic O'Brien, Damien Clarke, Henry McLoughlin, Conor Flaherty, Kieran Willmore, Joseph Tumulty, Yvonne Hoary, William Dillon, and James Murphy.

honour of speaking, expressing their gratitude to Yvonne and GRD for giving them the opportunity to engage in paid work while being part of such a meaningful community event.

They also took the opportunity to thank their master craftsmen: Padraic O'Brien and William Dillon for their excellent work on the Loan Libraries, as well as Mary Kenny for her beautiful artwork on both libraries. Finally, appreciation was expressed for our Caro Crusaders: Conor Flaherty, Kieran Willmore, Henry McLoughlin, Joseph Tumulty, and Uzair Khawaja.

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Town Hall Theatre AGM

By Maria Connolly

“Our theatre is beautiful, that’s a given, and all our work of recent years has enhanced it beautifully, but that can never stop. We are the guardians at present, but different people will come in the future. Our duty and hope is to hand it to whomever in a really good state,” stated Chairperson Máire Hughes at the most recent Annual General Meeting.



Committee Members L TO R: Alan Harney, Noel Lohan, Máire Hughes (chair), Mary Barber, Aoife Vaughan (Secretary), Frances Leahy (Treasurer), Missing from photo - Elaine O’Hanlon, Brian Derrane & Ben Parker

Theatre Society members were informed that a grant of €17k from the Community Climate Action Fund facilitated the installation of solar panels on the building in April 2025. Energy costs were always a massive concern, but thanks to the solar panels the building currently has a 22% energy surplus.

Two new tenants were welcomed in 2025. Local artist collective Group 8 have set up their headquarters in the offices to the front of the building, and ceramic artist Amy Ní Neachtain is renting a separate office space upstairs. Together with Ballinasloe Life, this brings the building to three long-term rentals, which provides a steady monthly income stream for the theatre, along with seeing more people visiting and using the building.

Good news for patrons on seating, as a CCIF grant of €73k will facilitate some seating changes. In late January, work will begin to re-cushion and reupholster all 400-plus seats. A brand-new stage curtain will also follow.

“The theatre is going through a really exciting revamp, with newly reupholstered seats and a badly needed new stage curtain. Once finished, I certainly think we can justifiably call it one of the most beautiful theatres in the west and midlands,” stated Máire Hughes.

Work was also carried out backstage during the year to improve users’ experience. The bathrooms to the rear were repainted and brand-new lighting was installed. Dressing rooms are also in the process of being repainted.

The committee will be working closely with the Arts Officer in Galway County Council on promotion and programming to build on the variety and frequency of shows staged in the building.

Accountant James Coyle gave the financial report, which covers the financial year ending 31 March 2025. The surplus for the financial year was €10,736 from an income of €68,348. James explained that the theatre is in a good position financially and that, importantly, the theatre is completely debt-free, having paid off all outstanding loans in the previous period.

The committee were keen to thank all their supporters and those who are always on hand to help. Mention was given to: Gerry Moloney, Francis Healy & the CE Scheme, Seamus Harney, Galway Rural Development, Ballinasloe Life, Galway County Council, Fr. John Garvey, ADM and the wonderful group of volunteers the committee can always rely on for assistance.

They are extremely grateful to these volunteers and only wish they had more of them. If you would like to get involved in any way, please do not hesitate to get in touch; they would be delighted to have you.

Committee: Máire Hughes (Chair), Aoife Vaughan (Secretary), Frances Leahy (Treasurer), Alan Harney, Mary Barber, Noel Lohan, Elaine O’Hanlon, Brian Derrane & Ben Parker.

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Town Band Helps Celebrate Festive Season

By Colm Croffy

At its Christmas Concert in the Town Hall Theatre, the band opened proceedings with the theme tune from 'The Polar Express', a film about a magical train journey, followed by a selection of music from the *Harry Potter* series of films and the *West Side Story* hit 'Somewhere'.

They also performed the challenging, but much-loved, selection of Bruno Mars hits. Bandmaster Frank Kennedy was delighted at how well the band members rose to the occasion, performing some very difficult pieces to a high standard on the December night.

The Band were delighted to have St. Brigids Community Choir from Kiltoom as their guests on the night, who treated the appreciative audience to 'Gaudete', 'Night of Silence', 'Innkeeper', 'Song for a Winter's Night', 'In the Bleak Midwinter', 'Christmas Sanctus' and Bob Dylan's 'Forever Young'. The Band and the Choir then joined together for the joyous 'Carol of the Bells' and the seasonal favourite 'Oh Holy Night'. €1,000 raised on the night was donated to Portiuncula Paediatric Unit.

Over the last fifteen months, Padraig Burke, Andrea Rodaro and Ellen O'Connell, from the Band of the Western Command, together with Frank Kennedy, have been working with the new recruits in the Junior Town Band, teaching them how to read music and play their instruments step-by-step. They had their first public appearance when they were joined by some members of the senior Band on concert night, performing a selection of Christmas carols.

The Band performed seasonal carols and tunes, entertaining the Christmas shoppers when they assisted the Folk Choir's charitable fundraising event on Christmas Eve.

Weekly rehearsals resumed on Thursday 8th January, with new music top of the agenda to prepare ahead for the St. Patrick's



Hall of Fame Award Winner Noel Madden with Town Band Committee members Brian Derrane (Pro), Damien O'Neachtain, and Frank Kennedy (Bandmaster)

Day Parade and for an exciting special collaboration with Music Matters Orchestra on Thursday 12th February, St. Brigids Community Choir, Kiltoom on Saturday 18th April, and the Ballinasloe Active Retirement Association Choir on Sunday 30th May. The Band will also visit local nursing homes over the coming weeks.

Town Band members were delighted when long-time and stalwart member, Noel Madden, was recognised for his contribution to the band and the

community at the recent Ballinasloe People of the Year Awards. Event Master of Ceremonies, Darren Frehill, gave the following citation for the Hall of Fame Award:

"We honour someone whose life has been shaped by service, community spirit, and a constant readiness to help others. From a young age, this individual stepped forward whenever needed – quietly, reliably, and never seeking recognition. Their efforts have supported local initiatives, major events, and many moments when a calm, dependable presence made all the difference. Their leadership has guided organisations through significant change, always with integrity, patience, and a belief in people working together. As a volunteer, he has given generous amounts of his time – driving, organising, lending support wherever it was needed. Beyond any formal role, they are known for simple but profound acts of kindness: checking in on those who are unwell, easing pressures on grieving families, and offering steady advice and reassurance. Their influence is measured not just in years of involvement, but in the many lives strengthened by their quiet support. And just as a baton guides a group in harmony, theirs has directed far more than music – it has helped lead, inspire, and unite the wider community.

It is my great honour to announce this year's Hall of Fame Award to... Noel Madden."

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St Patrick's Parade Gears Up

By Colm Croffy



Preparations are under way for this year's Ballinasloe St Patrick's Day Parade, which has been confirmed will take place on Tuesday, 17 March, starting at 2pm. The parade will assemble at the Fair Green car park before proceeding through the town, continuing a long-standing and well-supported local tradition.

Following the success of last year's parade, the Parade Committee is inviting local schools, community groups, sports clubs and musical societies to take part, with a particular call to the business community to enter the commercial category.

Committee Chairperson Johnny Walsh said the committee is currently in the planning stage and hopes to see a strong mix of community and commercial entries on the day.

"We're encouraging local businesses to consider taking part in the commercial category," Johnny said. "Down through the years, factories and businesses were always a big part of the parade. It didn't have to be about promoting the business - it was about showing support for Ballinasloe. Any form of participation is welcome, whether it's a float, a walking group or something creative."

Johnny also encouraged entrants to bring a sense of fun and imagination. "We want people to be creative, a bit mischievous

and to interact with the crowd. The parade is about enjoyment and a bit of craic. We had some memorable characters turn up last year - who knows who might appear this time," he stated.

The Parade Committee is encouraging anyone interested in taking part, particularly businesses who may not have entered in recent years, to start planning now and help make this year's St Patrick's Day Parade a lively and inclusive celebration for the whole town.

The route will follow Society Street towards Main Street, up Slí Na hAbhann, down past Dunlo Street and then ending at a viewing stand in St Michael Square. This parade, presented by a yet-to-be-selected Grand Marshall, will use the National Feastday as its theme, encouraging participants to celebrate or highlight any subject they wish.

The parade will award cash prizes for the best showcase in five categories: Culture, Education, Voluntary Groups, Sporting and Commercial, and the Tony Colohan Award for the overall winner.

Ballinasloe's Paddy's Parade provides a great showcase of and for the town, and this year's event will hopefully be another highlight. If you would like further information about this event, how to enter, or how to sponsor, you can contact the organisers at **087 6207477** or at **089 9973008**.

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Gerry Sweeny – Still Stage Struck

By Colm Croffy



Ronan Lardner, Aoife McClafferty, Frances Leahy, Caitríona Moore, Message McLoughlin, Sarah Corcoran, G.S., Ailbhe Lohan, Mollie Coyle, Emily Ní Cheallaigh, Cian O'Cheallaigh, Lisa Whyte.

A conversation with Gerry “Duck” Sweeny is like engaging with the living Wikipedia of live amateur musical performance of the town, the region and perhaps the island – so deep is the knowledge, allied with a huge passion for what was once termed “Light Opera”.

After six decades of being in front of and behind the curtain, he is enjoying his role as National President of the Association of Irish Musical Societies (AIMS), which has been about since 1965 and represents some 120 or so Musical Societies across all the island – North & South.

He is the first Ballinasloe person to hold the office, the first from the Midlands Region (founded in the mid-80s through the great work of the late Ancel O Carroll (Ballinasloe) and Billy Flanagan of Athlone).

During the last 12 months he has visited and met each of the member societies, or tried to get to as many of their live shows as is possible.

The lineage to the love of live musical is clear – his Mum, who died in 1994, was a hairdresser and did all the hair and styling for the shows in the 60s and 70s. Musical shows back then were WOW – where TV sets were not one per device, per room, but one set every three or four houses!

From the Second World War, live entertainment chiefly for provincial towns like Ballinasloe was by way of the touring fit-ups, the circus and the pictures – the cinema. The town that Gerry grew up in with his younger brother Sean had two – The Central (where Utah is now) and the Plaza, or Central Cinema, in the Town Hall.

All other live entertainment was provided by whatever the community could produce itself – by way of drama, musical, pantomime, ceili or concert. “Back in the day, the largest cost for the Musical Society was to buy out the week of the cinema and cover the revenue for the parish from our own ticket sales.”

For Gerry – watching his Mum organise all the wigs for the leading ladies and female chorus and then do the hair and make-up backstage on the nights of the show was his first induction to the magic of the greasepaint and footlight.

“I might only have been seven or eight, but I can remember the build-up, the excitement, the glamour, the costumes, the whole atmosphere – the way all to the show were caught up in it for a few magical hours, from instruments being tuned to the encore,” he recalls.

For the 60s and 70s, while Gerry was being schooled – in a variety of spots!! – the Society, for the full week, would hire in a leading lady and leading man for the principal show of the year.

“I can remember – my first show to see from the stage steps was ‘New Moon’, which had our very own Maureen Donaghue playing opposite RTE’s Bill Golden. ‘Dessert Song’ the following year featured Chris Curran – again an entertainer with national standing. Austin Gaffney starred in Maureen’s last appearance on stage in the sell-out ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ in 1981,” Gerry recalls.

He remembers the last night of Fiddler for a sadder reason

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also – as the crew and audience left the theatre that night, little did anyone realise that 170 km east along the road, 48 young Dubliners would lose their lives in the Stardust disaster.

Gerry can rattle off the shows, like the decades of a rosary – the leads, the awards, from Town Hall to Convent Hall (Cinderella) to the John O Shea Hall runs of Wizard of Oz and South Pacific, owing to the Town Hall Theatre being gutted and renovated.

He served his time as a trainee barman in the early 80s in Cookes Bar, Shantalla, Galway, and was helping his parents with the Dunlo St. premises at the same time. His departure and sojourn to Oz, where he worked in a Sydney hotel, is book-ended in the shows he was absent from – as opposed to seasons. He returned from his wanderlust in the late 80s and was duly re-elected to the committee as Co-Treasurer with Michael Mc Cullagh and Dello Gill.

He toiled in several officer/committee roles for all of the 90s, noughties and 10s – wherever a gap emerged, his talents were deployed. In 2008 he records with glee being Chair when the Society's own production of HONK won the Best Overall Show at the Annual AIMS Awards – "Golden Globe winner Jessica Buckley won the Best Actress with the Killarney Society, and I do hope she gets the Oscar she deserves this March," notes Gerry.

In the 2006 season he was elected to the Midland Regional Council, and in 2008 he was elected to the National Council of AIMS and has been involved in National Musical Society affairs since.

Reviewing the huge changes to the scene, he is clear in what he has observed: "Today's audiences have way too much choice, poor concentration levels, are very demanding even of local amateur productions, and if it was bad to get a few lads 20 years ago to sing and dance on stage from the pub – they are not even in the pub to be got now," he laughs.

So what then for a future for a clearly much-loved tradition – that still serves to keep venues operational and audiences entertained? "Dance and movement is strong, drama is especially strong – particularly among the second-level students. We have

to do much, much more to encourage the good work of teachers and schools in introducing them to musical theatre."

He explains about a new training and outreach initiative that AIMS have been involved with in schools. There are 50 to 60 full shows with music and dance being done across the country every year, and AIMS, with some pilot support from the Arts Council – "I was giving out the prizes and a teacher says to me, 'Thanks, it's great to prove to these kids that they can get plaques for something other than football!'"

Looking at the strength of the tradition in town and the loyalty of audiences down through the years, he is forensic: "The tradition of the schools with their plays, their musical shows, the youth groups, the Band, dance groups and schools like Clonfert producing an annual show on top of the Breezy DNA – keeps it sustainable," he states.

The biggest barrier for him is simply costs – and how they impact on the price the audience have to pay for tickets – "The musicians or orchestra make up some 20% of the costs, the venue, sets, lights, sound would average at some 35%, costumes 15%, marketing & advertising some 15%, 5% insurance, administration and on average 10% performance royalties to the owners of the music. It's why the average run is gone from eight shows to four!" he explains.

As well as getting more people to perform and more to come and see the shows, he wants to "attempt to get the Arts Council as a body see some merit and role for the community performance arts sector, as well as focusing on the professional artist".

For Gerry, his priority over the next 12 months is to secure a steady stream of funding to underpin the development of the Association and to solve the annual conundrum of 1,800 members seeking tickets for their Awards Weekend when they only have room for 1,400.

It's obvious for Gerry that nothing will stop him or his dedicated colleagues in ensuring that all in the seats and on the stage can "dream the impossible dream".

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Ireland Reads and a New Book Club

By Maria Connolly



Gaby Walsh, Library Assistant with Galway Public Libraries.



Galway City Council Chief Executive Liam Conneally "Getting Lost in a Good Book"



Photographer Trevor O'Donoghue, whose exhibition will be shown in the library in March.

The library has some exciting special events planned for February. Starting on Friday 6 at 11.15am, a "Shared Reading Book Club" will run for four weeks. Come in, listen and enjoy a story or poem read aloud. This book club is open to people aged 18+. Library Assistant, Gaby Walsh (Galway Public Libraries), will be leading the group as part of her MSc Library and Information Management research in conjunction with Ulster University. Participation is voluntary and completely anonymised.

Throughout the month of February, Irish library services and organisations that promote reading, literacy and the arts are asking everyone to embrace the joy of reading and 'Get Lost in a Good Book'.

From picture books and biographies to travel guides and computing, audiobooks and graphic novels to e-books and annuals, we have it all! So dust off that library card and explore the extensive collections on offer at Galway Libraries, completely free of charge. The month will culminate in Ireland Reads

on Saturday 28 February. To mark the day, the library will be hosting a special story time with library staff at 11.15am – all are welcome to attend.

To mark the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Cystic Fibrosis Ireland, in collaboration with Focus on Happiness and Trevor O'Donoghue Photography, have commissioned 'The Cost of Breathing', a series of symbolic self-portraits which confront the emotional reality of poverty and cystic fibrosis.

The 7-photograph series asks what it feels like to survive in a system that often overlooks your needs. A place where everything has a cost, even the breath in your lungs. Each image represents an emotional truth, expressed through colour and symbolism inspired by the chakra system and the emotions they reflect. For people living with cystic fibrosis, poverty is an everyday reality. This is not a comfortable story, but it is one told with hope. This travelling exhibit will be available to view in the library from Thursday 12 – Thursday 19 March.

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Magic of Shrek for Town Hall

By Colm Croffy

Ballinasloe Musical Society are really looking forward to its upcoming annual production of the smash-hit stage show "Shrek the Musical", coming to the Town Hall Theatre this March.

Based on the beloved DreamWorks animated film, Shrek the Musical is a hilarious and heart-warming show for all ages, packed with catchy songs, colourful characters, and a powerful message about friendship, acceptance, and being true to yourself.

Audiences can expect big laughs, high-energy musical numbers, and the kind of theatrical spectacle Ballinasloe Musical Society is well known for.

The show will run from Wednesday, 25th to Saturday, 28th March, with nightly performances at 8.00pm. In addition, there will be a special matinee performance on Saturday, 28th March at 2.00pm, perfect for families and younger theatre-goers.

Rehearsals are well under way, with a dedicated cast, crew, and creative team working hard to bring the fairytale world of Far Far Away to life on the Ballinasloe stage.

The cast includes – Shrek: Cian Forde; Princess Fiona: Emily Uí Cheallaigh; Donkey: Ethan McNea; Lord Farquaad: Patrick Byrne;



Shrek the Musical Ensemble

Dragon: Hannah Wright; Gingy: Ailbhe Lohan; Pinocchio: Ellen Keane; Young Fiona: Teagan Farrell; Teen Fiona: Isabel Leech; Mama Ogre: Michelle Naughton; Young Shrek: Josh Naughton; Big Bad Wolf: Fiachra O Maolduin; Three Little Pigs: Max Madden & Chloe Mannion; White Rabbit: Bláithín McCann; Sugar Plum Fairy: Abaigh Hardiman; Ugly Duckling: Caoimhe Keary; Mama Bear: Sarah Jane Mangan; Baby Bear: Eve McCourt; Humpty Dumpty: Jacinta Keane; Mad Hatter: Kayleigh Holohan; Elf: Mags Mulligan; Dwarf: Emma McGrath; Guard: Aishling Gillen; Duloc Greeter: Frances Leahy; The Knights: Leoni Hedderman, Mollie Coyle & Patrick Hanrahan; Thelonus: Brian Derrane.

Tickets priced at €21, and €18 for the matinee, will go on sale soon. Theatre-goers are encouraged to keep an eye on the Ballinasloe Musical Society Facebook and Instagram pages for ticket release dates and booking details.

Don't miss this ogre-the-top musical adventure that promises fun, laughter, and a whole lot of heart.

For updates and more information, follow Ballinasloe Musical Society on Facebook and Instagram.

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Clontuskert Drama Group Present: "The Stations"

By Colm Croffy



Clontuskert Drama Group: Cast members of The Stations. **BACK ROW (L-R):** Declan Kelly (Director), John Paul Butler, Emma Doubleday, Thomas Dolan, Bryn Coldrick, Enda Shiel, and Thomas Brennan. **FRONT ROW (L-R):** Brid Lawless, Jacqueline Nevin, Olivia Lyons, Carmel Frehill, and Mark Houlihan.

spinsterhood – until romance blossoms with neighbour Jack Devers (John Paul Butler). Jack is doted upon by his mother, Freda, brought to life by Carmen Frehill, who has her own problems dealing with the romantic attentions of her long-time neighbour, Stanley's Uncle Ned, played by Thomas Brennan.

No stations would be complete without the parish priest, and the formidable Father O'Malley, expertly played by Brian Coldrick, ensures order is maintained – with enthusiastic assistance from the energetic Sr Bernadine (Emma Doubleday), a fitness-loving nun determined to get everyone involved in the keep-fit regime.

Don't miss the debut production from Clontuskert Drama Group. "The Stations", a hilarious three-act comedy, written by Co. Mayo playwright Carole King, will be performed in St Catherine's Hall, Aughrim, on Thursday, February 19 – Saturday 21. Curtain up is at 8pm each evening.

This is the first time ever that the fledgling new Clontuskert Drama Group is producing a play, and there is mounting excitement in the locality!

The story centres on the impeccably house-proud Veronica O'Brien, played by Brid Lawless. Veronica is a woman who likes everything just so. Her long-suffering husband, Stanley (portrayed by Thomas Dolan), does his best to stay on her good side, while rarely meeting her exacting standards.

Veronica's well-meaning but hapless friend, Martha, played by Jacqueline Nevin, is, in Veronica's eyes, destined for

Veronica's constant boasting about her children is put to the test when daughter Ciara (Olivia Lyons) arrives home from London without her aristocratic husband, Lord Tristan (Enda Shiel). Matters worsen when son Jonathan (Mark Houlihan) returns and reveals his true colours, much to the horror of his righteous mother – and in full view of the parish priest and assembled neighbours.

This debut production from Clontuskert Drama Group promises plenty of mayhem, mistaken intentions and comic intrigue, all brought to life under the expert direction of acclaimed Drama and Performance Director – Creagh native – Declan Kelly.

Tickets can be purchased on Eventbrite at this link: www.eventbrite.com/e/1980262105264 or on the door on the night.



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GAA Club Wins County Award

By Maria Connolly



Participants at the Gaelic for Mothers and Others Kick-about. Proceeds went to East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support.



Participants at the Gaelic for Mothers and Others Kick-about. Proceeds went to East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support.

Off the field, the club were celebrating recently as they were presented with the Coiste Peil Na nOg award, an acknowledgment of all the hard work and dedication being done at underage level in football in the club.

Well done to all players from the nursery all the way up through the juvenile teams. A huge thank you to all coaches, the Games Administration Committee and also to all the club officers, who work tirelessly both on the pitch and behind the scenes. Thank you also to Galway Football Chairman and Ballinasloe native, Micheál Geraghty, who presented the award on the night.

Congratulations were also extended to LGFA player, Emma Mitchell, who has been awarded a Connacht GAA Bursary. Ballinasloe GAA/LGFA are so proud of her fantastic achievement that recognises both dedication on the pitch and her commitment to her studies. Emma, who is studying in UL, has lined out for both Galway LGFA and the UL O'Connor Cup Team. Best wishes to her for the rest of the season ahead.

The club recently held its AGM and the following officers were elected:

President: Willie Ward; Chairperson: Shane O'Connell; Vice-Chairperson: Mark Ward; Secretary: Gerry Seale; Assistant Secretary: Stephen Kerr; Treasurer: Gary Coone; Assistant Treasurer: Laura Howley; Registrar:

Francis Healy; PRO: Paul Madden; Children's Officer: Helen Lally, and Executive members: Dennis Nolan, Ronan Campbell, Noel Dillon, and Brendan Hayes.

They had a fantastic turnout for the Gaelic for Mothers and Others (G4M&O) family kick-about. There were over 60 participants on the pitch, with members of G4M&O, Junior Ladies, their kids, and families all getting involved. It was great to see so many ages and abilities enjoying a relaxed, fun session together – exactly what the club is all about. Thanks go to everyone who came along and helped make it such a positive afternoon.

On St Stephen's day, the club's footballers had their annual mini tournament. There was an excellent turn out again, and the day provided good entertainment for both players and spectators. Proceeds from both events went to East Galway and Midlands Cancer support.

Training and activities for all age groups are either already underway or will commence shortly. Please check out the website: ballinasloegaa.ie for all information.

Finally, the club will hold its annual social in Gullane's Hotel on Saturday February 7. Tickets are priced €35 and available from club officials.



L-R: Tara Cunnane (Secretary, Coiste Peile na Og), Colm Brown (Ballinasloe GAA), Shane Kenny (Ballinasloe GAA), Micheal Geraghty (Chairperson, Galway Football Board) and Gerry Seale as Ballinasloe GAA were presented with the Coiste Peile na Og award for 2025.

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IKKI Celebrates 50th Anniversary

By Maria Connolly



IKKI at the WUKF Irish Open, Waterford.

The IKKI association was founded in the town in 1976 and is looking forward to celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

There have been various abodes over the years: the gym upstairs in the social centre on Society St; St Brigid's Hospital hall; Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh; and now the Emerald Ballroom.

The association has competed in international tournaments all over the world for many years now. Friendships both at home and abroad have blossomed and are as active as ever. Many students have passed through the IKKI over the 50 years and the association hopes that all have fond memories of their classes.

Throughout 2026, classes in the Emerald will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays. Students will have the opportunity to perform grading exams, which occur four times a

year. (A grading is a practical test where students have the opportunity to advance to the next level of expertise, provided they are ready to do so.)

As students gain expertise, many like to compete in tournaments. Some tournaments are local; others are at national and international level. There are many disciplines involved in tournaments such as kumite or sparring, kata (a non-contact event which can be performed

individually or as a team), and kobudo.

Team kata is a difficult discipline with emphasis on synchronised movement between team members. Teams can have two or three competitors involved and there is also a section for family members to compete in a team together. This aspect adds a new



Family Kata by the Naughtons: Siofra, Caoimhe and Conor.

Club Team Kata: Niamh and Laura Costello with Nik Aimal.

dimension to team kata and is a great opportunity for parents to compete with their children. There are novice and experienced categories.

Competition is a great opportunity for students to compete against other styles of karate and gauge their level of expertise. It is the 'acid test', in a sense, of a competitor's ability to perform in an open tournament. IKKI competed very successfully in a number of tournaments throughout 2025, including the IKIF International Championships in Tokyo, Japan.

Competition creates great camaraderie among participants. The training beforehand gels the group together. However, it's not all about competition. People come to karate for different reasons: fitness, something different, self-defence, resilience and discipline, and many wish to practise karate in a non-competitive way.

If you would like to take up a new sport for 2026, you can visit the IKKI website for further information at www.ikki.ie

and drop into their classes anytime (Mondays and Wednesdays, 7-9pm) to have a look or a chat. If you used to do karate as a child, remember, you can always come back and train; there's no upper age limit! Karate can be a lifetime study.

If you would like to study a complementary discipline, the association also teaches kobudo, the art of ancient Okinawan weaponry.

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Rugby Club Looks Forward to Black Tie Gala

By Maria Connolly



Godfrey Gibbons, Paddy and Josephine Feehily, and Kevin Dolan at the Rugby Club's St Stephen's Day celebrations.



Simon Keller, Ross Keller, and Ciaran Kelly at Ballinasloe Rugby Club's St Stephen's Day celebrations.

Christmas at Ballinasloe Rugby Club would not be the same without the annual meeting on St Stephen's Day for the O'Flynn Cup, featuring the current senior team up against the Exiles.

Another cracker (excuse the pun) was served up and two teams went hell for leather as some old scores were settled. The main event was preceded by a tag match in memory of Tommy Dolan. Afterwards, the clubhouse was a hive of activity as people met up to reminisce and catch up with old friends.

Now that the turkey has settled, the club is into the competitive part of the season with leagues soon coming to a close. Thankfully, many of the teams will be competing for honours. The senior team has consolidated its position in J1A for next season and enjoyed a great first-round home win against Connemara in the Junior Cup. This team keeps growing in strength and, along with backup from the seconds, only great days lie ahead for this special group of men. Following on from the leagues, cup campaigns will kick off and the club hopes to be competitive throughout all age grades.

The club's 150th-year celebrations are in full swing

as they get closer to the Black Tie Gala. This will be held in the Shearwater Hotel on Saturday, March 21. It promises to be a great night with a five-course meal with wine, preceded by a pre-dinner drinks reception sponsored by Ahascragh Distillery. There will be a big draw on the night and music by ALL TALK. Numbers will be limited and it is a strictly over-18s event. Tickets for this once-in-a-lifetime event are on sale

at €100 per person. Please contact Jacinta on 087 245 9138 or Pearse on 086 243 2084 to reserve your place.

Finally, the Minis coaches enjoyed a great day with Connacht's Conor Galvin, who ran an early-morning coaching session for them. It was a beautiful morning, a really enjoyable session, and loads of great ideas and learning to bring back to the kids over the coming weeks. If you've ever thought about getting involved in coaching or even just giving a hand on the sidelines, message the club – there's always room for more help.



Well done to all the underage representatives who lined out for East Connacht in early January in a development game in Ballina. A fantastic effort from Conor, Cian, Lorcan, Charlie, Conall, Aidan Óg, Harry, Rian, and Cullainn — great commitment, teamwork, and skill on display throughout.

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Town AFC Gets FAI Seal

By Maria Connolly



Pictured at the presentation of the "Club Mark Award" to the club by the FAI are (L-R): Mike Riddell (Club Archivist), Shane Fallon (Senior Ladies Manager), Ellen Egan (Club Treasurer), Damon Kearney (FAI), Bjorn Manning (Club Chairperson), Bronagh Kinsella (Child Welfare Officer) and Demelza Dooley (Club Committee member).

The club were absolutely delighted to be awarded the much sought-after "Club Mark" award by the Football Association of Ireland recently.

The Club Mark is an accreditation award that recognises the adoption of best practice in governance, management and administration.



The Under 12 A team who defeated Mervue United in the Connacht Cup. Back row (L-R) Aron Connaughton, Senan Greene, Harry Kinsella, Aloyzy Florek, Oisín Ryan, Jacob Ryan, Jack Mannion, and Nathan Kelly, FRONT ROW (L-R): Petie Keighrey, Tommy Treacy, Tiernan Hogan, Jack Duffy, Noah Shephard, and Reese Coyne.

The club committee wish to recognise the tremendous background work put in by Chairperson, Bjorn Manning, Child Welfare Officer, Bronagh Kinsella, and Club Secretary, Sonya Coyne. Their efforts helped to ensure that the club reached the very high standard required.

Everyone at the club would like to offer their congratulations to former club player, Keela Donnelly Meehan, who has recently signed for League of Ireland club, Athlone Town. She was also selected for the Irish International under-16s squad for two international friendlies recently, both against Portugal. The very best wishes to Keela; everyone at the club is so proud of your achievements! Keela also received an award recently in the Individual Sports Star section at the People of the Year Awards.

On the pitch, there was a milestone for the under-8 girls' team, who played their first-ever match recently against Bealnamulla away from home. There was some fantastic soccer played by both teams in this fun game and it was a great experience for the new team. The under-8 girls are kindly sponsored by Fergal Dunnes Super Valu.

The under-12 girls' team put in an excellent performance at home in Shearwater Hotel Park in their most recent league game versus Bearnna in the Galway Premier Division. They ran out 1-0 winners and secured three well-deserved points. The scorer on the day was Einin Donnelly Meehan.

The under-12 boys' A team had a great result recently in the Connacht Cup against top-class Galway City club, Mervue United. The "Town" were 1-0 behind at half-time but equalised early in



Keela Donnelly Meehan, Ballinasloe's newest international player.

the second half. Mervue again took the lead, but once again the "Town" came back to secure the equaliser shortly before the end of normal time. The game went to penalties and the "Town" held their nerve to win the shoot-out by five goals to four. Ballinasloe now advance to the next round of the Connacht Cup. The team are sponsored by Precision Fire and Gas.

The men's under-21 team had a very good result recently against a well-organised Oranmore side in the Galway League. They ran out winners by three goals to one, with two goals from Ryan Dowd and one goal from Conor Dowd. At the time of going to press, the under-21s are currently placed third in the league table. Congratulations to all.

Finally, the club celebrates the 30th anniversary of its sporting exchange with Halewood Juniors in Liverpool this year. You can read a piece on this in the 'Heritage' section of this edition of Ballinasloe LIFE.



The under 12 girls' team. Back row (L-R): Michaela Kelly, Maliyah Blair, Saoirse Fallon, Ella Caulfield, Breeze Clarke, Beth Kelly and Maria Loughnane. Front row (L-R): Emily Mae Lloyd, Einin Donnelly Meehan, Aubree Egan, Ela Hogan, Sarah Berrigan and Zoe McLoughlinn.



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Nine Pearses Players for County Squad

By Maria Connolly



Cathal Kelly, who was recently ratified as the Men's Senior Hurling Team Manager



Alan Flynn, the new Head Coach of the Padraig Pearses Men's Senior Football Team.

the primrose and blue. At the time of writing, the lads were preparing to face Sligo in the FBD Shield Final.

As part of the GAA club planning process, the Club Plan was recently launched at the AGM. The plan was driven by Club Planning Officer/ Assistant Secretary Anne Kelly and the Steering Committee. It was the product of an open meeting held in August, at which five subgroups were formed to look in detail at proposals to improve all facets of the club over the next five years.

These subgroups met over recent months, and each put together a series of projects for the next five years. Progress on implementation of the plan will be managed by the Club Executive Committee. The 2026-2030 plan can now be viewed on the club website: <https://padraigpearses.roscommon.gaa.ie/>

Pre-season attention has turned to the Roscommon FBD League campaign for the Senior Men's Football team. Pearses contributed eight players in the first game of Roscommon's season, a win against Leitrim.

The team included four debutants: Conor Ryan, Jack Tumulty, Sean Canning and Eoin Colleran, and was captained by Caelim Keogh. Mark Richardson, Ronan Daly and Declan Kenny also played on the day.

Nine players featured in the second game, with Paul Carey making a welcome return from injury. Congratulations to all the coaches who have worked with the players through the grades, and all at the club hope they will have many days to come in

[roscommon.gaa.ie/](https://padraigpearses.roscommon.gaa.ie/)

Niall Murray was recently ratified as the Manager of the Senior Football Team for 2026, with Alan Flynn subsequently coming on board as Head Coach. Cathal Kelly has taken over as the Manager of the Senior Hurling Team. Everyone at the club wishes both management teams the very best of luck for the season ahead.

It's not long now until a group of supporters from the club will be making their way to the Big Apple for the Roscommon v New York Connacht Championship match in April. With Keller Travel looking after the group's itinerary, a fantastic few days are in store for the fifty-strong club members heading stateside, more anon!



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Move Activator Pole Walking Classes

If you're considering doing more exercise as part of your New Year's resolutions and want to start with something more gentle and more social than the typical gym class, why not consider Move Activator Pole Walking classes?

Now in its second year, the socially inclusive classes take place on Tuesdays in the Emerald Ballroom at 12. The exercise session lasts for approximately 40 minutes, and each class is followed by tea, coffee and a chat, because staying active should be social too!

Tutor Carol Slevin says that she was inspired to start the classes after using the Activator poles herself during lockdown. She found them so helpful that she thought, "right, I'm going to share it." She says that the classes attract "everyone from 20-somethings up to 90-odd", and they offer people a chance to meet others from different backgrounds or ages they wouldn't normally socialise with. Carol leads the classes with Sharon Williamson, whom some people may know as the Gym Manager from Coral Leisure.

Activator poles help with aerobic fitness, mobility, strength and balance for people with different abilities and fitness levels. There are also chair exercises, which are restorative and more gentle on the body. The poles are suited to all levels and abilities, and the classes are suitable for people with mobility issues too. If you are interested, please contact move.ballinasloe@gmail.com or send Carol a message on (086) 356 0041. The group also has a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/p/Move-Group-Ballinasloe-61556909698936/>



Golf Club Poised for New Season



The Club held its AGM recently, and the following are the Officers and Committee for 2026:

President Gerry Barrett, Chairperson Mary Molloy, Secretary John Hurley, Treasurer David Flynn, Course Manager Brian Conneely, Inclusion & Development Officer Richie Carroll, Men's Committee Seamus Duffy, Women's Committee Nora Callaghy, Events Committee Caroline Layng, Trustees Anne McCullagh, Michael Ward, Dermot O Mahony.

The events diary is currently being finalised, with golf competitions to cater for all ages in men's and women's golf.

The Men's Winter League is reaching a conclusion, and the Spring League will commence immediately thereafter. A team event is planned for St Brigid's Bank Holiday Weekend, with the Captains' Drive-In on St Patrick's Day.

Best wishes were extended to Stephen Ruane, Men's Captain, and Breda Conneely, Lady Captain, for the forthcoming year by the Management Committee.

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Tennis Club's Beginners and Improvers

By Maria Connolly



Some of the tennis club members at the club's Mixed Doubles night

It's been a busy winter season with activities and matches every evening of the week. The recent mixed doubles Christmas event was a great success, and a huge thanks to all 24 players who took part. The finals night was well attended with festive treats including mulled punch and mince pies with cream. Martin Sibanda and Niamh Walsh, the eventual winners, were warmly congratulated by all.

2025 was a successful time on the courts with increasing numbers taking part in coaching and in tournaments, including the Midlands and Connacht leagues. There is no doubt that the future looks good for the club and the players go from strength to strength.

For those that would like to pick up a new sport, or get some exercise as part of their New Year resolutions, the "Get Back into Tennis" programme (for beginners and anyone wanting to shake

off the cobwebs) continues on Thursday evenings, 7 pm – 8 pm. It is open to all adults (non-members pay €5 per session). All equipment is provided, and everyone is welcome to come along. This is a facilitated session that caters for all abilities and has proved to be very popular.

Junior coaching sessions are in full swing and the Easter junior camp is starting on Monday, March 30; keep an eye on social pages for details as it is likely to book up fast.

Finally, the tennis club is offering new and existing members 15 months for the price of 12 if you sign up in February. This is a great way to get into tennis in the

spring.

For more information on the club, go to Ballinasloetennis.net, or find them on Facebook or Instagram.



Players at a recent 'Get into Tennis' night. The classes are open to members and non-members.

Ballinasloe Athletics

Ballinasloe Athletics took part in the Galway Indoor Athletics event held recently. The club trains every Tuesday and Thursday at 6 pm at Dunlo running track, and new members are always welcome to get involved.



◀ Alex Cunningham, who secured first place with a gold medal and a personal best performance in the long jump



◀ Clodagh Hogan, who also had a strong weekend, winning a silver medal in the 60m sprint. Clodagh's time was also a PB

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Swimming Club Celebrations

By Maria Connolly



Members of Ballinasloe Swimming Club pictured with Seán Madden at the Performance Nutrition Workshop for Swimming, proudly sponsored by Ballinasloe Credit Union (BCU)

The swimming club had a great end to 2025 with awards and fun at their annual Christmas night, at which a number of awards were presented. The swimmer of the month for November was Eloise Monaghan, and Harry Kinnucane in December. Most improved Junior Swimmers were Abigail Monaghan and Jack Connaughton, while the most improved seniors were Maeve Campbell and Philip Costello. Caoimhe Lohan won the swimmer of the year award for 2025. There were many other awards on the night as well.

Many local organisations were generous and donated prizes and vouchers for the swimmers. The club would like to thank: **Coral Leisure; Calahan Jewellers; Ballinasloe Masters Swim Club; Tommy Costello and Cuckoo Hill; Omniplex Cinema; Aillwee Caves; Pallas Karting; and Harley Tees.**

In 2026, the club hosted the first night of the AquaSprint League meeting, which also featured Athlone swimming. The junior swimmers performed really well with lots of fun and sprint racing. Thanks go to all the parents and coaches for their hard work, and to Coral Leisure Ballinasloe. There will be four more



Abigail and Jack with their awards for Most Improved Junior Swimmers

meets away in the next few months, culminating in a grand final in June. The seniors have also opened their season, and they took part in their first long-course competition in Limerick recently.

The swim club is currently receiving donations from the **Tesco Community Fund**, and shoppers can vote for them by putting a blue token in the relevant box following their shop. Any help would be appreciated, and all monies received go to new swimming equipment.



Caoimhe Lohan, the swimming club's Swimmer of the Year



Casey and Jack at the swimming club's Christmas award's night

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Coral Leisure Partners Jack and Jill Foundation

By Maria Connolly

Coral Leisure is proud to announce its partnership with Jack and Jill Children's Foundation as their designated Charity Partner for 2026.

Jack and Jill is a nationwide charity that provides essential in-home nursing care and respite support to families caring for children up to the age of seven with severe learning disabilities and complex medical needs.

Their services give exhausted parents much-needed support, including end-of-life care, with no waiting lists, means tests or red tape. Since 1997, Jack and Jill has supported over 3,200 families across Ireland, including 464 families currently receiving care. The Galway branch currently supports 29 families.

Coral Leisure takes pride in being at the heart of the communities they serve. Supporting children and families in need is a cause that aligns closely with their values and their commitment to the communities where they operate.

David Moore, Operations Director, says of the decision: "Having met the Jack and Jill team, as well as some of the families they've helped along the way, it was an easy decision for Coral Leisure to make Jack and Jill our Charity Partner for 2026. Our loyal members are always up for a challenge, and we know how supportive they have been of worthy causes in the past, so we're excited about what the future holds as we embark on this new partnership."

Throughout 2026, each of the eight Coral Leisure facilities will participate in Jack and Jill's flagship fundraising initiatives, and the team at Coral Leisure Ballinasloe are also planning a busy



Sharon Williamson and Mary Ward
two of the Charity Coordinators for
Coral Leisure Ballinasloe's partnership
with Jack and Jill Foundation



Amy Kenny, Mary Ward, and Caoimhe Craughwell,
Charity Coordinators for Coral Leisure Ballinasloe

programme of events for the year.

They will be hosting a bake sale on Monday, February 16 from 9.30am-3pm. Throughout March, they will celebrate a "March Spring Clean Up", encouraging people to do a spring clean of their wardrobes and drop in items. On Saturday, May 30, they will take part in a national fundraiser for the foundation, "Up the Hill for Jack and Jill", when the team will climb Croagh Patrick. And on Friday, 12 June, there will be a Summer Party Night at the Shearwater hotel.

If you would like to get involved in any of the fundraising events this year, please contact Coral Leisure Ballinasloe on **(090) 964 5755** or ballinasloe@coralleisure.ie. You can also visit the social media channels for details on how to participate - keep an eye out throughout the year for further events as they are announced. Every euro raised by their efforts will go directly to funding in-home nursing care and respite support for children with complex medical needs and their families.



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National Cyclo-Cross Event Success

By Maria Connolly



Local girl Sol Lally, who won all four rounds of the Under 8 girls' race at the recent Cyclo-cross series event held in Ballinasloe.



Lara Moloney of Ballinasloe Cycling Club, who finished third in the Under 10 girls' race.



Rowan Walker of Ballinasloe Cycling Club, who finished third in the Under 10 boys' race.

Powerhouse Racing) winning and Noah Finnegan (Square Wheels) third.

Next up were the Under 10s. Rowan Walker of Ballinasloe Cycling Club came third in the boys' race, with Oliver O'Sullivan of Orwell Wheelers Cycling Club completing his clean sweep of wins across all rounds. In the Under 10 girls' race, Marian Mulvaney (Sliabh Luachra Cycling Club) got her third win of the series. Her club-mate Emily O'Mahony was second, with Lara Moloney of Ballinasloe

Ballinasloe Cycling Club welcomed the fourth and final round of the 2025/26 National Cyclo-cross series recently. The club pulled out all the stops, laying out a great course on the Fair Green and improving on the design used for last year's national championships.

After some discussions last year, the club decided to host a relay race on the Saturday night and eight teams took part, ranging in age from Under 14s to seniors. It was a great prelude to the main event on Sunday.

Racing got underway around 9.50 am on Sunday morning with the Under 6s.

Ballinasloe Cycling Club had great success in the younger age groups. Leading the pack was Sol Lally (Ballinasloe Cycling Club) in the Under 8 girls' race, who completed a clean sweep of four wins from four rounds. Alice Bell (Shelbourne/Orchard CC) was second, with Caoimhe Dunne of Western Lakes CC third in the same race. Hugh Dolan from Ballinasloe Cycling Club was second in the Under 8 boys' race, with Charlie McCarter (Caldwell

Cycling Club third.

In the Under 14 girls' race, Lilly McDermott (TC Racing) took her third win of the series, which gave her the overall series win. Alice Moloney (Ballinasloe Cycling Club) finished second at her home venue.

Results for all the age categories can be seen on the Cycling Ireland website: www.offroadcyclingireland.ie.

A huge thanks to Ronan Lally and all the team from the Cycling Club for producing a great event. A high bar has been set. Special thanks to everyone who helped out to build the course and marshal on race days, and to the local Civil Defence. Thanks also to the local council, Galway GAA for the use of their facilities, and all the event sponsors: Ballinasloe Credit Union; Gullane's Hotel; Domac Plant Hire; Dunne's Super Value; Chadwick's Ballinasloe; Ivan Mullins Construction; Cooper Helmets and Galway County Council.

The generous prize sponsors were: Dubarry; Barry's Cycles; and Dolans Service Station.

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Calling all Leonards!

By Damian Mac Con Uladh

Wicklow-based Peter Leonard, whose father hails from Lissyegan near Ahascragh, has long been fascinated by his surname. An uncle had traced the family line back to the late 1700s in Ahascragh, where the name appeared as "Lenord" on a handwritten land lease. But Peter wanted to know more. Where had the family lived before Ahascragh? Were the Leonards of Norman or Gaelic origin?

"There was plenty of speculation, but nothing concrete," Peter recalls, until Galway historian Joe Mannion drew his attention to a reference in a medieval manuscript, the Leabhar Ua Maine (Book of Hy-Many). The text appeared to describe the family and their circumstances in the mid-1300s. Peter arranged for the poem to be translated, and that discovery fuelled his quest to trace his family's roots.

That quest has been greatly aided by advances in Y-DNA testing since the 1990s. Unlike autosomal DNA tests offered by companies such as Ancestry or MyHeritage, which typically trace ancestry back five to seven generations, Y-DNA testing follows the direct male line and can reach back to the period when surnames emerged in Ireland, around AD 1000.

Y-DNA research also helps genealogists overcome the so-called "blind century" of the 17th and 18th centuries, when wars, upheaval and land confiscations disrupted Ireland's long tradition of recorded lineage. Events such as the Nine Years' War, the Flight of the Earls, Cromwellian confiscations and the Williamite Wars caused the collapse of the Gaelic order and left major gaps in family records.

"Y-DNA has opened a new



Peter Leonard

perspective on Irish genealogy," Peter explains. "Both surnames and YDNA are passed from father to son, allowing science to support or challenge traditional genealogical claims. YDNA testing compares male descendants of surnames and identifies shared paternal ancestors, lending credibility to many ancient genealogies once dismissed as fabricated."

Research into the Leonard name in County Galway has identified at least seven distinct Leonard families, including the Ahascragh clan. "These are all genetically distinct families who have very different histories, but all use the same surname," Peter says.

"Most derive from local Gaelic origins while others have come into the county in recent centuries."

One of the most striking findings is the gap between family lore and historical reality. Stories of descent from Spanish Armada sailors or General Humbert's soldiers are common, but the evidence shows that most Leonards descend from medieval local clans whose original identities were lost when Gaelic surnames were anglicised.

The research also points to strong population continuity in rural Galway, with Leonard families still living close to the areas occupied by their medieval ancestors. Peter is keen to see more local participation in Y-DNA testing, hoping this will help many in the diaspora who are unsure of their Irish origins pinpoint where their ancestors hailed from.

Anyone interested – especially those bearing the Leonard name – can learn more by contacting Peter at xpeterleonard@gmail.com.



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Fire Service Recognises Long-Service Employees

By Colm Croffy



The crew of Ballinasloe Fire Station. **BACK ROW (L-R):** Firefighter Martin Keane, Driver Mechanic Niall Hurley, Firefighter Aidan Ward, Firefighter Mikie Lyons, Firefighter Kevin Dolan, and Firefighter Toji Kunjumon.
FRONT ROW (L-R): Firefighter David Dillon, Driver Mechanic Anne Coughlan, Station Officer Thomas O'Grady, Firefighter Douglas Rafter, Driver Mechanic Patrick Clarke, and Sub-Station Officer Jamie Ward.

The local fire station is celebrating two members of their crew who recently received a long-service award, and the delivery of a new, state-of-the-art fire truck. Tom O'Grady, Station Officer, and Anne Coughlan, Driver Mechanic, have both completed 32 years of service with the Fire Station in Ballinasloe this year, having joined in 1994.

Tom was born and raised in Ballinasloe, while Anne is originally from Ballymacward, 13 miles outside the town. She has lived in Brackernagh for the past 24 years.

Anne says she was initially attracted to the role by reading in the advert that Galway City Council are an Equal Opportunities employer, and that the job is open to both men and women. She says that she has not thought of leaving at any point over the 32 years, due to the variety and the camaraderie with co-workers. "The fire station has a brilliant crew now, and in the years gone by," she adds. With just twelve firefighters based at the station, the staff develop very close relationships.

Tom adds that "the adventure and excitement appeal to me, along with the extensive training we receive on a continuous basis", have held his interest in the job. He joined "to serve my community" and notes that the most rewarding aspect of the job is "the personal satisfaction I receive of knowing we as a crew made a difference".

Both Tom and Anne stress that there is no typical working day. "We could get one call, three calls, or no calls at all," says Anne. However, Anne notes that some calls can be hard: "the loss of life, especially when you know someone... we also lost a few co-workers, which is very sad."

Tom adds that he "would like to acknowledge the personnel of Ballinasloe Fire Station, both those currently serving and those who have since retired. A special thought for all our former colleagues who are no longer with us."

As with other fire stations in Galway, Ballinasloe is recruiting for

Retained Firefighters. They are particularly keen to attract more women to the service. Anne would encourage any woman to apply. "It is a very rewarding job. Come into the station, meet the crew, and look around." Firefighters only have to be available 24 weeks of the year, which is done on a week on/week off basis. To apply, visit <https://www.galway.ie/en/job-vacancies/rolling-call-retained-fire-fighters>.

The station is also celebrating the reception of a new fire truck worth €500,000. The Scania CP28 is fully equipped with a larger 1,800l water tank, the capacity to create and store 100l of foam, and a filtration system to keep smoke out of the cab.

Tom notes that "only two new fire engines were allocated for Co Galway in the five-year plan", so Ballinasloe were fortunate to receive the truck.



Station Officer Tom Grady and Firefighter Anne Coughlan receiving their 30 year distinguished medal awards



Pearses March to the Kingdom for All-Ireland Scór na nÓg

By Maria Connolly



Miriam Darcy, who won the Connacht Title for Recitation at Scór na nÓg. Presenting the award is Tommy Kelly, Chair of Scór Connaught.



Padraig Pearses Drama Group, who recently won the Connacht Title at Scór na nÓg. **BACK ROW (L-R):** Oisín Murphy, Kate Killeen, Erin Arru, Ailbhe Glynn Desmond and Tommy Kelly, Chair of Scór Connaught. **FRONT ROW (L-R):** Miriam Darcy, Kate Killeen Lyons, Aoibhín Seale and Katie Grenham.

Padraig Pearses have recently had great success in Scór na nÓg, with Miriam Darcy winning the Connaught Title for her self-written recitation, *"My Darling Sarah"*, and the Drama Group winning for their play, *"Mythological Love"*.

The drama group includes: Oisín Murphy, Kate Killeen, Erin Arru, Ailbhe Glynn Desmond, Miriam Darcy, Kate Killeen Lyons, Aoibhín Seale, and Katie Grenham. Congratulations to all on their fantastic achievements so far.

Tom Costello, who wrote the group play and who mentors the

drama group, assisted by Marie Glynn Desmond. The Sound Engineer is Darragh Glynn Desmond. Thanks also were extended also to Miriam Darcy's mentor, her father, Hubert Darcy.

Both Miriam and the Drama group are scheduled to compete in the Scór na nÓg All Ireland Final, taking place in INEC in Killarney on January 24, just as the magazine was going to press.

The opening match of Roscommon's National League campaign was scheduled for January 25, so a number of supporters were expected to make a weekend of it in Kerry.

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Heritage Society Spring Plans

By Colm Croffy

Members of the Heritage Society got little festive downtime, with a plethora of requests since the *Hosting's Journal 2* launch and the Christmas edition of *LIFE*, from people overseas chiefly searching for their roots.

The take-up and interest in the "Forged in Fire" project, which had a series of public engagements, has grown considerably among people who had distant connections to the town but now appear very animated about their ancestors, movements, careers and progress.

The WhatsApp group was very lively, with members pooling information on personal reminiscences, burial records and online archival sources.

Another windfall from the *Forged in Fire* project (which will have part two of its podcast documentary published and available in February on Apple Podcasts and Spotify) is the number of families who are donating papers, ledgers, photographs or indeed copies of same to the Society for safekeeping and uploading to a Community Digital Archive Zone.

It is planned to apply to the Heritage Council for some support to organise a user-friendly online archive which all the community can visit, share and see – like other societies.

Committee members are busy these weeks dropping the last of the complimentary copies of the *Hosting's Journal* to all the care homes, national schools and secondary schools within the common bond areas of the Credit Union, in the second year of a significant youth and elderly outreach programme sponsored by the local Credit Union.



Iggy Colohan and Pauline Colohan Bannerton contributing to the *Forged in Fire* Documentary



Nora Corcoran and Sally Ann Barrett recording history of Nora's tinsmith father Mick Ward

The finishing touches to the Society's first field trip are being worked up, which will see the group travel and be given some bespoke behind-the-scenes access at Midland sites. The Town Talks programme, now in its third year, is being finalised from February to April, with key dates currently confirmed for Saturday 28th February and Saturday 25th April.

A briefing on conservation works taking place at the medieval castle, led by archaeologist Fiona Maguire, along with colleagues in the Community Monuments Fund, will update attendees on this exciting project in February. Brid Mercer will deliver her talk on the Woodlawn estate in April, also in the Library.

The Town Talks photograph exhibition of newly digitised images from the National Library will take place at the end of March, with an accompanying walk guided by Heritage Society members. People are being advised to keep an eye on the Society's socials for further details.

RTÉ are making much of 100 years of broadcasting from the back of the GPO, and the Society have unearthed some interesting facts about the linkages between traditional musicians of the locality and the early broadcasting years. Research from Heritage Society members will also feature in a documentary on RTÉ One called *All That Remains*, which airs on Monday 11th March at 9.25pm. The programme explores the subject of burial sites linked to psychiatric hospitals.

Finally, the Society is planning to hold its AGM in February. Current members will be circulated for attendance, and new members can apply to join in advance by emailing ballinasloehistory@gmail.com.

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Feasibility Study for Aughrim Interpretive Centre

By Maria Connolly

Consultants are due to be appointed to undertake a feasibility study on the future use of Aughrim Interpretive Centre under EU Just Transition Funding.

The funding of €103,000 was announced by Fáilte Ireland and the EU in May 2004, and an e-tendering process to secure consultants to work on a plan to reimagine the site began some 18 months ago, leaving the appointed team some 16 months to complete their study, plan and recommendations.

That process fell through and a newer tender was advertised on eTenders last December for a budget of €127,000, with the new plan to be delivered within 16 weeks.

The centre was built through an ERDF European grant in the mid-90s on a site owned and operated by the Council, and opened in 1996. From the official opening to 2008, it had a full-time manager and crew, and a reasonable operating budget for the May to September season, but the collapse of the Celtic Tiger brought all that to an end. The seasons and opening times constricted, and visitor numbers collapsed.

The most recent official Fáilte Ireland numbers are less than 900, whilst Athlone Castle would be in the order of 37,000. King Johns Castle, Limerick, has 100,000 annually. For those who may argue that battlefield sites are no longer popular, the Battle of Boyne site, owned and managed by the OPW, had visitors of almost 360,000 in the 2023 season.

This site did not even exist when Aughrim originally opened; it was opened and developed in 2008. According to the State Tourism Authority, some 497,000 visit the three minor skirmishing sites of the “The Three Kings War”, and less than 900 visit the bloodiest battlefield site on the island, where estimates of the numbers killed in the slaughter approximate between 8,000 and 10,000.

The feasibility will not actually commit any works to be done, or improve anything in the operation of the facility, but will hopefully become a master plan for the development of the centre and site to bring it in line



Cllr Alan Harney at Aughrim

with more modern presentations of heritage sites.

One of the most recent heritage sites opened last autumn, with co-funding from the same EU Just Transition Fund and the Village Renewal Scheme, is the “Ernest Shackelton” Museum in Athy.

This visitor attraction went to planning in 2020 (applied to the same fund as Aughrim in 2023) and had a price tag of €7.5 million, with Kildare County Council having to find some 20% of the bill. Galway County Council, in the past 30 months, refused to buy Garbally Mansion (where the Williamite Commanders breakfasted on the morning of the battle) for a euro and are still reluctant to finalise the purchase of Dungaigue Castle in Kinvara from Clare County Council, to run the tours and banquets like Shannon Development did for 40 years.

Welcoming the process again, Cllr Alan Harney stated:

“This is a major milestone in the project to expand and develop the centre and is a project which I have been engaged on since I was first elected. Over that time, I have been closely engaged with the community in Aughrim and the staff of the tourism office in Galway County Council.”

“We have such a great opportunity for tourism development in Aughrim; it has the potential to be a jewel in the crown of the Irelands Hidden Heartlands region for Fáilte Ireland. But in order to realise this potential, we need to see a re-imagination of the interpretive centre,” he continued.

“I am so conscious that a huge amount of work has been put into the centre over the past 30 years or so by the Aughrim community and those from further afield. I am hopeful now that this current process will engage extensively with all of the stakeholders to come up with a plan for the next phase of the centre, which builds on the work of all those in the community.”

Cllr Harney concluded: “I will continue to work with our officials in Galway County Council and local stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for the centre, which will allow us to apply for capital funding in future funding rounds.”



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Soccer Club Marks 30 Years of Twinning

By Colm Croffy



The late Font Egan one of the Chief Mentors in 1996 in Halewood



Town AFC Under 12 Squad that travelled in 1996

Ballinasloe Town AFC will soon be celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of its hugely popular sporting and community exchange with Halewood Juniors soccer club in Liverpool.

The exchange came about after a conversation in the famous Society premises – pub between Joe Kelly senior, Tommy McGrath, and Martin Lynch from Liverpool. It was agreed by all present that it would be marvellous if a Ballinasloe underage team travelled over to Liverpool to play Halewood, and that Halewood could return the compliment the following year. The rest, as they say, is history!

“It was a late session, well into the wee hours, and Martin said something that struck me that night and ever since – he felt that the Liverpool soccer family had never, in his opinion, done enough to honour the memory of the man who had propelled them into the superstar club they are now – Bob Paisely. I think this twinning, in its own way, does just that,” explains Joe.

Approximately 120 people – players, parents, team managers, and club officials – travel from Ireland to Liverpool every second year. In alternate years, 120 travel from Liverpool to Ballinasloe. The Liverpool exchange normally consists of a three-night stay in local hotels, trips to Old Trafford and Anfield (to keep both sets of visiting supporters happy), and extra activities such as shopping, go-kart racing, swimming, cinema, etc. In Ireland, the Halewood contingent is treated to similar activities.

Current Underage Manager Warren Coyne was an under-12 player on that historic trip and beams with the childhood memories. “For most of us in 1996 it was our first time on a plane, first time out of the country, first time in Anfield, Old Trafford, and of course the slugging was morning, noon, and night. Westlife might have had the hits, but we took the music and sang our own silly verses on the bus, on the stairs, in the waiting lounges – poor Font, Lord rest him, got a lot of stick from our slugging,” he states.

The centrepiece of the trip is the game for the “Bob Paisley Cup”. The trophy for the competition was sponsored by the family of the legendary football manager, and a member of the Paisley family is normally present for the presentation evening.

The Mayor of the hosting town/Municipal District Council also officiates at the ceremony. The exchange has developed throughout the years and now, in addition, teams from both clubs also compete for the Irish Cup, with a new third cup game in place since last year.

For that first trip, Michael Staunton and Anne Marie Moran managed the team, while Sean and Peggy Riddell and Francis Egan helped with organisation. Joe Kelly senior has been a great organiser and supporter of the trip, while Joe and Cait Kelly have been the principal organisers of the tournament for many years now and do tremendous work behind the scenes.

Anne Marie has many, many moments of recollection – her boys were big into soccer and she, like so many other parents, got roped in as assistant Manager with Michael Staunton (whose son Mark was the captain). Thirty years on, Anne Marie is puzzled as to why there were no incidents, no rows, no bad episodes on the trip. “They were excited, energetic, boisterous, yes, but they and their parents were superb ambassadors for the Club, their families, the town – Ireland. Their behaviour was exemplary – they displayed, on and off the field, the true values of our Club, our community, their families,” states Anne Marie.

For her, what she remembers fondly is the natural grace, enthusiasm, and warmth from Mrs. Paisely (Bob’s widow) when she presented the cup. “She had a wonderful way to charm, to inspire, to encourage all the players from Ireland and England about being their best and enjoying the beautiful game – she signed autographs and posed for photos with the players and chatted with all the families – it was a stand-out for me,” she recalls.

Many of the original participants are still actively involved with the club today. For example, current managers for the Ballinasloe team, Patrick Kelly and Warren Coyne, were both players on the 1996 team that visited Liverpool.

Johnny Walsh was Club Secretary in 1996 when the exchange trip started and is still a club official some 30 years later. On the Halewood side, Joe McGuinness was very involved with the trip for many years, while Councillor Edna Finneran (formerly Mayor of Halewood) is still very much interested today.



Mrs Bob Paisley congratulating and chatting to parenter ans player at the final whistle



Young members of the Ballinasloe squad at Dublin Airport and in John Moores University residence in 1996

Joe Senior was the principal driver behind the project and, back in the late 90s, the Celtic Tiger was not even a cub – money was hard got and the €9.99 Ryanair flights were not yet available. “There was some opposition; some folks thought we’d bankrupt the club, but we did fundraisers, we had great business community sponsors, and we took all the economy options – even staying in Moore Hall University Student Residences. But when we came home and had all our bills paid, the Committee gave £1,000 back to the Club Development Fund! That sealed it for the future,” states Joe.

Joe gets a little wistful at the roll call of thanks to the ambitious and hard-working souls for the kids of Ballinasloe – many of whom have been called home – but he livens up to laughter with his fondest memory of his first and only trip. “The sight of about 24 youngsters, all under the age of 12, bobbing around the departure lounge in Dublin Airport wearing their painter white caps on so we could keep an eye on them.”

For Joe, while his patrons may have been huge Reg Army supporters, he remains glad the Manchester tribe were not left out of the ground visits. “Sport is a huge gift in life, but at the end of the day it is the friendships that this twinning spawned, and sustained, that he is most proud of – many parents, players, and officials visit the West of Ireland and will always stay a night or two in town to catch up,” he notes.

The exchange has been fruitful in other ways too. David Moran, the son of former youth manager Anne Marie Moran, spent



Capt. Mark Staunton exchanges first ever historic pendants with opposition



Joe Kelly Snr., Anne Marie Moran and Warren Coyne - Organiser, Manager, Captain in 1996



Joeby Kelly, Mentor; Bjorn Manning, Club Chair; Johnny Walsh, P.R.O.

two seasons with the Manchester United youth team and, as a result of this, the Club were able to secure a friendly against the Manchester United youth team during the 2000/1 season.

This long-standing event is not just about sport – although the bragging rights in winning the various cups do make the games very competitive.

Joeby Junior Kelly, though not involved this year, has been very involved over several past seasons – he was a seven-year-old mascot, travelling with his dad on the first trip. “When the Club can get a good team together to travel or host, it always works well. We are hosting this year – we have always used Gullane’s Hotel as the base for the visiting families and it gives both Clubs on the Irish Sea something special to look forward to, and it’s third generation in my house with our young lads now getting involved,” states Joeby.

Current Ballinasloe Town AFC Chairperson, Bjorn Manning, has said that the club are really looking forward to welcoming Halewood in 2026 for this very special 30th anniversary. He also thanked all the fundraising efforts and the sponsors who make it possible.

Club stalwart Johnny Walsh, and Secretary at the time (but who didn’t travel), looks back with pride. “It’s been great for the kids, for the mentors, the parents, the two clubs down through the years, and it’s critical that we keep up the balance between Old Trafford and Anfield – a lot of families locally would have relations going back generations living in Manchester.”



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Mary Farrell – A Life of Service

Mary was born in Cudoo, Co. Galway, in 1925, the eldest of the six children of Pat Forde and Winifred King.

Her first trips were in a horse and trap and she did her lessons by oil lamp. She loved her time in Taquin National School, along with her brothers Tom, Joe, Stephen and PJ, and her sister Freda. She would often get the chance to mind the younger pupils when the schoolmaster was absent and would have loved to be a teacher, but the opportunity was not there.

In her youth, she worked in the Railway Hotel, Athenry, and later Lawlor's Hotel in Naas, where she delighted in all the style and glamour of the racegoers – especially the hats! However, on her visits home, she envied friends in their finery back from London on holidays, so she decided she had to go and see it. She hated every minute she lived there and, on returning to Cudoo for Christmas in 1947, she caught the eye of Ned Farrell, who was working for the Land Commission in the area.

They were a great match and six months later they were married. He was eleven years older than her and she believed the neighbours thought that she married him for his money, but little did they know he spent every shilling he had on books, records and Cappataggle Hurling Club!

They both loved card playing, set dancing, the Aughrim Slopes Céilí Band, hurling and Irish history. They named their five sons after patriots: Éamonn de Valera, Robert Emmett, Pádraig Pearse, Terence McSwiney and Theobald Wolfe Tone!

They set up home in Kilconnell and Mary loved the village from her arrival. She had great neighbours and friends and a lovely locality. Kilconnell in 1948 had most village requirements, as well as the beloved abbey. However, there was no running water.



Determined to remedy this, she became a founder member of the Muintir na Tíre branch and campaigned successfully for a water scheme.

While raising her family, she still managed all the secretarial work for Cappy Hurling Club; registering players, recording minutes of meetings and the hugely important and stressful job of contacting players at home and abroad for matches, in an era where a phone was a rarity and emails unimagined. Visits to her home from the likes of Gus Lohan, John Joe Byrnes and other Cappy players and supporters were frequent and welcome, and Mary rejoiced in the many successes of the club into the modern age.

At the time of her death, she was Honorary President, and it was poignant to see the large contingent of Cappy hurlers who filed past her coffin in their club colours.

Mary was a true Christian and Child of Mary who witnessed and welcomed huge social change in her long life. Always interested in human rights, she marched with her grandchildren against the war in Iraq in 2003 and, no doubt, she would have marched for Palestine if she could. She lived a long, interesting and fulfilling life and, in her later years, penned her memoirs, which are published on the Skehana and District Heritage website. She believed in looking to the future, counting her blessings, doing good where she could and always, always trusting in the Lord.

We would like to express our deepest condolences to all of Mary's family: Eamonn & Teresa, Emmett & Denise, Sr Annette, Pat & Johnny, Pearse & Betty, Terence & Noreen, Theo & Carmen, Ethna & Ray; her brother PJ & Marie; sister-in-law Kathleen Farrell; and all the Farrell and Forde families.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis!

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Kitty Colbert – An Appreciation

Kitty Colbert had an independent mind and when she made up her mind, that was that. Discussion was optional. When she was sent to the Bower secondary school in Athlone, she did not want to stay and ran away to the marketplace and hopped on the next cart and horse back to Moore. She was subsequently sent to the Sisters of Mercy in Ballinasloe.

After finishing secondary school, she had wanted to study medicine, but the health of her mother was poor and she decided to stay and take care of her, ably helped by Eileen Connaughton, who had lived with the family since she was a child. As a present, her father, James, gave her a car for herself. Rare for most people to have a car in the 50s, never mind an 18-year-old girl.

Kitty was very sociable and loved music and dancing. As a non-drinker with a car, she was much in demand heading to dances in Athlone, Tullamore and further afield.

She worked as a primary school teacher, subbing all around South Roscommon and East Galway, and found she had a special talent dealing with those children who were different, what we would now call special. She was offered a place in the first national Special Needs courses, but romance intervened.

She met her husband-to-be, Norbert, a young solicitor new to town, playing table tennis at the local club. They married two years later in the Church of St Peter and Paul in Athlone. Four years and four babies later came Norbert, John, their beloved Sharon, who died too young, and David, and five years later Evan, or the love child, as she called him, arrived.

As well as rearing her family, she also worked tirelessly, hand in hand, to build Hutchinson Davidson, the law firm bought in 1959 with her parents' money. She continued doing the accounts for the firm, only retiring when she was 85, and only then because she was told to.

Kitty loved music. She played the violin and the piano and every time there was a gathering in the house, which was often, she would regularly take her place at the piano and rag the accompaniment for anyone who wanted to sing. She was a committed member of St Michael's Church choir for decades.

She was also one of the founders of the Dunlo Singers, a choir who sang all over Ireland. Out of that came the Dunlo Kids and Kitty was one of the people who helped do their make-up, a task that she continued with the junior choruses with the Ballinasloe Musical Society.

In later life, she was thrilled and touched when someone greeted her in the street and reminded her that she had done their make-up. In fact, it was difficult to get down the street without someone stopping her and reminding her that she had taught them, sang with them, did their make-up or played golf with her.



She was really involved with all manner of community activity in the locality.

She lived her entire life within a radius of about seven miles: from the family farm in Moore in south Roscommon, where she was born, to the family home in Ballinasloe in east Galway. She did not roam far and wide — but she lived her life here deeply. She knew the land, the fields. More than that, she knew the people. She knew the family histories of so many people.

But despite living most of her adult life in Galway, Kitty always regarded herself as a Rossie — proudly and loudly. Roscommon was not just where she was from; it was who she was.

When her son John was playing for Galway Minors against Roscommon in Hyde Park I, Kitty went to the match with two flags: a Galway flag to support her son — and a Roscommon flag to support her county. A year later she did the same thing with David, waving the Roscommon flag every time Roscommon scored and the Galway flag every time Galway did.

She loved cards — was a loyal and keen member of the Bridge Club and also hosted regular ladies' poker nights on a frequent basis.

In later years, broken-hearted by the tragic death of her beloved daughter Sharon and her husband Norbert, she tried to forget her sorrow by getting involved with the Ballinasloe Active Retirement Association, which had been founded by one of her close friends, Chris O'Flynn, amongst others.

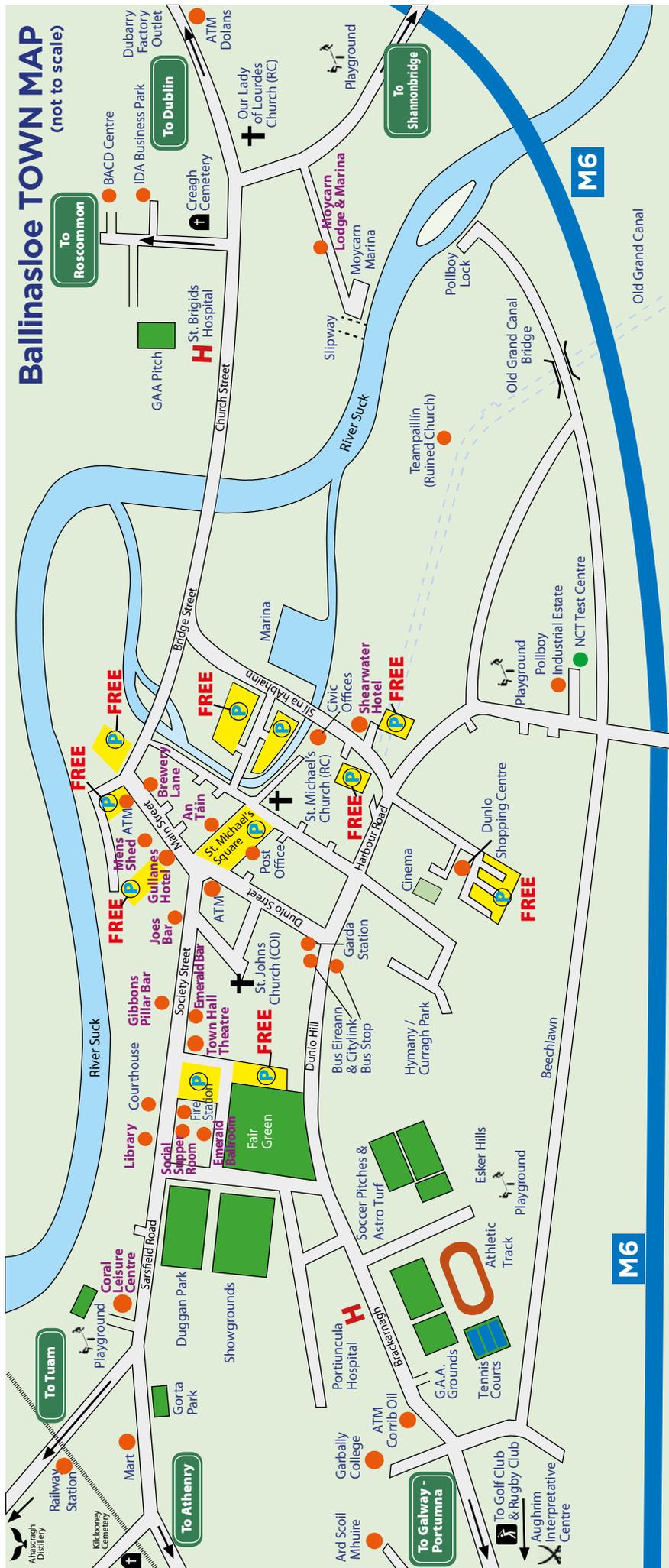
She went on every holiday and outing accompanied by her great friend, Pat Kelly, until she sadly died, one of the first victims of Covid. Her son Norbert, in latter years, was her chaperone for these outings.

She loved those holidays, insisting on putting down deposits as soon as every new holiday was announced. She had a deposit paid already for next year's big holiday.

Golf was also one of the loves of her life. She was introduced to Ballinasloe Golf Club by her aunt Rose when she was just a teenager, loved playing all her life and was Lady Captain in 1970 and President in 1979, one of the first female presidents in Irish golf. If she was prouder of anything more than that, it was winning the President's Prize in the Millennium Year 2000 at the grand age of 67.

She had a special love for her grandchildren, constantly revelling in (and boasting about) their successes and worrying about their difficulties.

She lived a fulsome and generous life. To Norbert Ronan, John, David and Evan, her sister Mary, daughters-in-law, and her cherished grandchildren, we offer our sympathies.



Ballinasloe History Walk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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