

BALLINASLOE LIFE

An insight into the area we live in Vol. 16 Issue 1: April/May 2026

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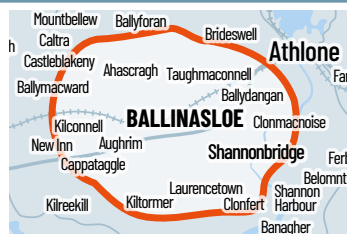
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REAMHRA

The St. Brigid's Hospital (1822–2013) saga washed its messy way onto our shores in the past few weeks in ways that are sad, conflicting and frustrating. Despite all recent "works" to St. Brigid Hospital buildings and sites been welcomed, they all casually omit that it took effective notice of prosecution of one state agency by another to move the dial on this project.

The condition of St. Brigid's had deteriorated to the point where Galway County Council initiated formal legal dereliction proceedings against a State body (HSE) — which is quite significant in Irish planning and heritage terms.

Contrast this with the way the HSE Midlands is treating the campus of St. Fintan's Psychiatric Hospital in Portlaoise — an €80,000-plus spend on the complete refurbishment of the historic clock tower began five weeks ago!

Galway Council Executive made two good decisions recently — moving the might of planning laws to enforce a state agency to fulfil its obligations was one, and refusing a biogas plant on the outskirts of town was the other.

The 222-page Independent Consultants report to An Coimisiún Pleanála found not alone just four reasons preventing the building of a plant beside a school, rugby club, golf club, but an additional six based on the scientific data of the UK, EU and Australian authorities that prove so many of the assumptions to be flawed.

Ahascragh's own — Mary Harney TD, as Minister for Health, formally signalled the closure of the 22 psychiatric hospital sites in 2000 (A Vision for Change) — with a commitment that closure was never meant to equal abandonment, that the State (via HSE/Government) had an obligation to replace what was lost.

A quarter of a century later, locally we know how hollow that commitment was. It is one of the reasons that we find so little reassuring out of any Dept. of Health or Government in relation to downgrading of the PUH Maternity Health Services.

As I write this article the sun is shining brightly and there is no sign of rain, so it looks like we are in for some beautiful spring weather.

Gardeners cherish this time of year as they take pride in their gardens and prepare for the year ahead. Likewise, it is an opportune time for businesses to freshen up shop fronts and add a few plants/flowers. This will complement the Shop Front Enhancement work which was done in recent years. First impressions always last in a visitor's mind, so it is in all our interests to have our town and community looking its best.

Litter is still a problem everywhere in this country but let's buck the trend and focus on disposing of all waste in a proper manner and use the facilities we have at our disposal.

I can never repeat this too many times. If we want our

Welcome to Ballinasloe Life Volume 16 Issue 1

In 2018, the then Minister for Environment Denis Naughton and BACD commissioned a forum, workshop and report on "Reimagining St. Brigid's" — that is nearly a decade ago. In Gullane's Hotel — all the State agencies were there, even the HSE, who assured the attendance that the sites were being prepared for disposal — save a few acres around the Community Nursing Unit.

The recommendations of that St. Brigid's report were stark but also enlightening in a way that the HSE's approach to the dead of these institutions, as evidenced by Niall Breslin's excellent RTÉ broadcast documentary "All That Remains" about the unmarked graves of St. Loman's Mullingar, is not.

The community wanted remembrance for those who lived and died within the incarceration of its walls, not just those who worked there. There was no one locally who wished for any of the shameful awkwardness of times past to be pushed under the carpet.

Listening to some of the harrowing testimony of callers to Liveline, seeing the TG4 News piece about how unmarked graves of patients are shielded by GDPR on one hand and patient confidentiality on the other seems adding further cruelty in death.

Across mature functioning states like the UK, USA, Canada and Australia, best practice now converges on: Individual dignity → name recognition, Visibility → no hidden burial grounds, Truth → acknowledge institutional history, Participation → community involvement, Continuity → ongoing remembrance.

It's encouraging to note that our community, by orchestrating and participating in a report on the campus's future, was more in tune with international best practice than our own State's cowardice and neglect to the living legacy of its very own Magdalens, Tuam Babies and Industrial Schools-type travesties.

Enjoy the read!

Colm Croffy, Editor.



town to thrive and get ahead of online buying, we need to shop local and promote the offerings we have available. Anything you want you can find in this town if you take the time to look. You will be provided with a personal touch, excellent service and a smile to go with it.

As we enter our 16th year of production, the businesspeople of this catchment area have been hugely supportive of Ballinasloe Life.

You, our reader, need to be conscious of this when deciding on making a purchase for whatever you need, as without these businesses you would not be getting this free publication on a bimonthly basis.

Seamus Duffy,
Chairman,
Ballinasloe Area Community Ltd



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Clr Evelyn Parsons Highlights Progress

By Colm Croffy

Independent Councillor Evelyn Parsons has outlined a range of projects now progressing across Ballinasloe and the wider Municipal District, reflecting sustained work in recent years to enable the planning frameworks, secure funding, advance infrastructure and support community development.

First, preliminary design work is progressing for safety improvements at Creagh Junction, a location where concerns have been raised repeatedly by residents.

Clr Parsons also highlighted several community infrastructure projects she championed and secured under the Community Recognition Fund, including the upgrade of public toilet facilities in Ballinasloe, which are expected to be completed before the end of the year. Playground improvement works are currently underway, providing improved recreational facilities for local families.

She also confirmed that the River Suck Swim and Water Recreation project, which she initiated and secured Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme funding for, is now progressing through the feasibility stage. The project is examining the development of a safe open-water swimming area and related river-based recreation amenities and linear park in the town centre.

Funding for the project is ring-fenced, and Clr Parsons has made an expression of interest submission for funding "to develop the area in a climate-sensitive manner". Clr Parsons' submission also calls for a Blueway feasibility study along the River Suck. This would link from Ballygar to the proposed water recreational park area in Ballinasloe, and connect back with the existing Suck Valley Way.



Sorooptimists Committee Members at their event to mark International Women's Day in the Band Hall last month were Maura Joyce, Kathleen Croffy, President, Clr Dr Evelyn Parsons and Marie Rose Cullinan.

"The River Suck corridor has enormous potential as a recreation and tourism asset. I believe in being fiercely ambitious about developing it as a precious asset carefully and sustainably, which could bring real benefits to communities and our environment," she states.

The feasibility study for the Poolboy Eco-Biodiversity Park project at the former landfill site is now well underway. The project is examining how the former landfill site can be transformed into a safe, environmentally sustainable public amenity and biodiversity space for

the community.

In the area of heritage, Clr Parsons welcomed confirmation that the name of Eoghan Ó Tuairisc, the distinguished writer associated with Ballinasloe, will be reflected in the naming of portions of the new development at Dooley's Corner. She has also made a submission to An Post's commemorative stamp programme proposing that the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Grand Canal in 1828 be recognised in the 2028 national stamp issue. "If successful, a commemorative heritage event could be planned around this significant date," she stated.

"A lot of progress which is happening now is the result of working constructively with council staff, agencies, colleagues, volunteers and community groups, and making sure good ideas are supported and carried through to delivery," she said. She points to the transformation of Bethany Park in Poolboy as a powerful example of what can be achieved when communities are supported and empowered.

"With strong foundations now in place and communities at the heart of what we do, I believe the coming years can be genuinely exciting and transformative for Ballinasloe and the wider district."

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St Brigid's Campus Clean-Up Begins

By Maria Connolly

Cllr Alan Harney has welcomed the commencement of works to clean up the St Brigid's Hospital campus in town.

"I have long been advocating for movement on the St Brigid's campus. I have been engaging with the HSE and with our council officials extensively on this in recent times. In recent weeks, our officials in Galway County Council met with representatives from the HSE on-site to agree works for the St Brigid's Hospital campus," stated Cllr Harney.

"I have long been working to try and achieve concrete progress on this issue. The state of dilapidation of the buildings and overgrowth in the wider area is absolutely shameful," he declared.

"The HSE is the owner of the protected buildings and as such has a duty of responsibility to safeguard these premises. A derelict sites notice was issued to the HSE last April and since that time I have been working to achieve progress," he explains.

The works will include the clearing of vegetation and dangerous trees and a wider clean-up of the campus. The works are now well advanced and should be completed by the end of spring.

There is an urgent need to work to stabilise the buildings and



Cllr Alan Harney at the Clean Up Works at St. Brigid's Campus

stop water ingress which is causing major damage at present, and he understands this will form part of phase two of the project.

Cllr Harney concluded: "As a public representative from Creagh, it has been so important to me to deliver real and tangible progress on St Brigid's. These works are a really welcome first step in those efforts and I will be continuing to work with our officials to deliver concrete action on the St Brigid's Hospital campus."

Funding Secured For Creagh Junction

€60,000 in funding has been secured to progress design and planning for upgrades to the Creagh junction.

Cllr Harney stated: "As someone who uses the Creagh junction, I am so aware of all the problems and dangers it presents for all road users at present. Since I was first elected to Galway County Council, delivering progress on the Creagh junction has been one of my key priorities."

"I have been working with our engineers in the Council and also my colleague, Minister of State Jerry Buttimer TD, to make the case for the delivery of funding. We have heard so much talk over the past 20 years about the need for improvement at Creagh junction. Through my advocacy, I am very pleased that we have now secured initial funding to progress the design aspects of this project," explained Cllr Harney.

"I want to see a mini-roundabout delivered at the junction, as it would make it much safer for all using our roads and greatly improve traffic flows. I also want to see progress on road resurfacing and moving the pedestrian lights—which have been damaged for some time—closer to town, and I will be advocating for these works in the months ahead," noted Cllr Harney.

Funding for safety works at Cahir Cross, a dangerous junction which has been raised with Cllr Harney many times, has also been approved.

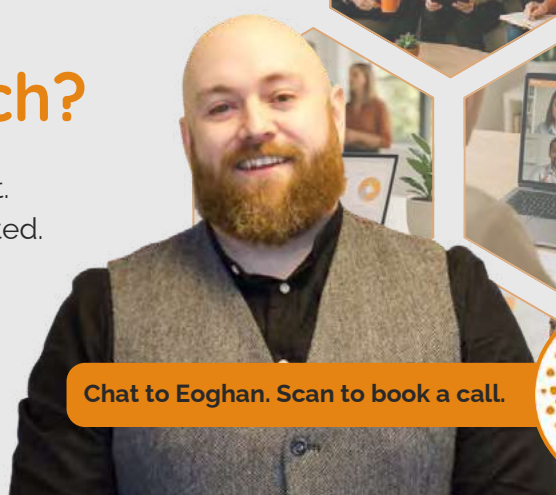
"As a councillor from Creagh, it has been very important for me to deliver on the Creagh junction, and I look forward to seeing plans and progression," he concluded.



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Playground Updates

By Maria Connolly

Work has begun on the upgrades to the playgrounds in Cleaghmore (behind Coral Leisure) and Hymany Park. Kompan was appointed as contractor and began work recently. It is estimated that the work will be finished by late spring. Both parks are closed while work is ongoing.

€100,000 in funding was secured last year for improvements to the two sites under the Community Recognition Fund. The upgrade will see new equipment added that will provide more accessibility for children with additional and sensory needs, as well as upgrades to the existing facilities.

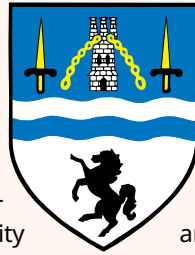
Cllr Alan Harney said: "It is really important that we invest in our playgrounds and ensure that they offer the best quality facilities for children in our communities. I'm working with a number of groups and communities to upgrade further playgrounds across the area."

Cllr Parsons thanked the local Ballinasloe council team for their work on the project and added: "These improvements will help ensure safe, enjoyable play spaces for children and families in our community. I will continue to advocate for more outdoor recreation and play amenities for Ballinasloe as a key town, serving the needs of both young and older members of our community."

The recent meeting of the Ballinasloe Municipal District council saw the issue of illegal dumping raised again. It was noted that illegitimate services offer to dispose of household waste, but go on to dump it in rural and bog areas.

Fine Gael Councillor Alan Harney is encouraging people to ask for identification and confirm their waste collectors are registered. He said: "[Illegal dumping] is not good enough; it's a blight on our landscape and particularly in rural areas such as bogs, we see drains blocked and that's causing huge problems for those who are looking to get in and cut turf."

The Councillor added that there are people "who've had contact



from Galway County Council who thought they'd gotten rid of their waste legitimately and in good faith, and weeks later, their waste has been found dumped, far away from where they live."

Cllr Parsons also issued a firm message on illegal dumping, describing it as a growing and unsightly problem that damages the environment, blocks drains, and places additional pressure on rural communities.

On a different topic, Councillor Parsons noted that the sale of the former St Brigid's Hospital campus in Ballinasloe offers a realistic opportunity to address the longstanding gap in domestic violence services in East Galway. Cllr Parsons has been advancing proposals centred on the regeneration of the former St Brigid's Nurses' Home as a location for domestic violence services and supportive step-down trauma-informed accommodation.

Cllr Parsons said the Health Service Executive's planned divestment of lands at the former psychiatric hospital campus could allow for a state-to-state transfer to Galway County Council.

"Access to refuge or step-down accommodation remains a serious gap for women and children experiencing domestic violence in this region, which I have advocated strongly for since first joining the council," she said. "The St Brigid's Nurses' Home offers a real opportunity to develop secure trauma-informed accommodation and supports that could make a meaningful difference for women and families."

Cllr Parsons added that a clear commitment from the local authority would be needed if the opportunity was to be realised. "There is no local refuge facility and transport is not always convenient or affordable."

An official for Galway County Council noted that they were "extremely aware of the urgency involved," adding, "We are looking at every different avenue to provide services. We have nothing finalised but we are working on it."



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Taoiseach Meets Local Businesses

By Colm Croffy



L-R Deputy Martin Daly, Joseph Naughton (Joseph Naughton Auctioneers), Seamus Duffy (BACD), Honoria Mitchell Black (Araya Marketing Solutions), Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Lyn Donnelly (BACD), Alan O'Grady (Western Postform), Cllr Michael Connolly and Brendan Kelly (KPW Print Management).

Ballinasloe's strong entrepreneurial spirit and the challenges facing regional businesses were highlighted during a recent visit by An Taoiseach Micheál Martin to the town, where he met with local enterprise leaders and members of Ballinasloe Area Community Development (BACD CLG).

The visit provided an opportunity for local businesses to outline both their successes and the obstacles facing companies operating in a regional town. BACD Chairman Seamus Duffy outlined the role of BACD in rebuilding employment locally.

Several business owners spoke directly with the Taoiseach about the realities of running and expanding companies in Ballinasloe.

Honoria Mitchell Black of Araya Marketing highlighted the pressures facing small businesses, particularly when hiring staff for the first time. She outlined the difficulty many small enterprises experience navigating employment responsibilities and recruitment. She also spoke candidly about the challenges of running a growing business while raising a young family, noting that flexible supports for entrepreneurs could make a significant difference for small business owners.

Alan O'Grady of Western Postform discussed the company's significant recent expansion and investment in upgrading its manufacturing facilities. He noted that the development was carried out without direct government support and emphasised the need for additional manufacturing and industrial space in Ballinasloe to allow businesses to scale and attract new employers to the town.

Meanwhile, Brendan Kelly of KPW Print spoke about the rapidly changing print industry, including rising costs and technological shifts. He outlined how KPW has adapted by diversifying services and investing in modern equipment, allowing the company to remain competitive despite industry pressures.

BACD representatives also stressed the importance of developing enterprise space and ensuring Ballinasloe is positioned to benefit from regional economic growth.

The meeting was arranged by Deputy Martin Daly, who has a constituency office based in the Ballinasloe Enterprise Hub on Society Street.



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PSRA No. 002398



Strong Turnout for Pulse Club Event

By Colm Croffy



Eoin Connaire (Galway LEO), Lyn Donnelly (BACD), Colm Healy (Macánta Nutrition), Mairead Herlihy (Galway LEO) and Gordon O'Connor (Macánta Nutrition) at the recent Pulse Club meeting, held as part of Enterprise Week in Ballinasloe Enterprise Hub.

ingredients. Colm shared the story behind the company's growth, from its early beginnings to developing a recognised Irish brand built on strong customer relationships and product quality.

Speaking after the event, Colm noted the importance of collaboration within the local business community:

"There is a fantastic sense of peer-to-peer support among businesses in Ballinasloe. Sharing experiences and learning from each other is hugely valuable, particularly

for growing companies like Macánta."

Local businesses gathered at the Ballinasloe Enterprise Hub (BEH) on Society Street for a special Pulse Club Lunch & Learn event, organised by Ballinasloe Area Community Development (BACD) in partnership with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Galway as part of Enterprise Week.

The Pulse Club is a business networking and knowledge-sharing initiative run by BACD to support entrepreneurs, remote workers and local business owners, providing opportunities to learn from experienced speakers, connect with peers and access practical supports to help businesses grow.

The 4 March event welcomed a number of new attendees, highlighting the growing interest in the initiative among the local business community.

The event featured guest speaker Colm Healy, Director of Macánta Nutrition, a Ballinasloe-based company producing Irish-made nutritional supplements focused on quality and trusted

The session also included insights from Eoin Connaire of the Local Enterprise Office, who highlighted the importance of engaging with business supports:

"Events like the Pulse Club are a great way for businesses to learn about the supports available and connect with others who are facing similar opportunities and challenges," states Eoin.

The Pulse Club continues to grow as a valuable platform for local enterprise development. The next meeting will take place at the end of March in the Ballinasloe Enterprise Hub, while the April meeting will take place on 30 April in Western Postform in Poolboy.

Businesses interested in attending future events or joining the Pulse Club mailing list can contact Lyn Donnelly at BACD by email at lyn@bacd.ie or by phone at 090 9646516.

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Calving & Security Cameras

By Maria Connolly

Gerry Stronge Photography started in Main Street in Ballinasloe in 1990. One of the many products Gerry sells are calving cameras. Cameras start at €50 for a basic model which is ideal for a small stable or calving box. The camera works off electricity and Wi-Fi, which can be worked from a static Wi-Fi box or broadband modem.

This camera can be viewed on up to 6 devices, i.e. mobile phones, laptops, or smart TVs. The next model is a waterproof indoor or outdoor camera, IP65 grade, costing €110.

The indoor rotating model rotates 360° and 55° up and down, has infrared for night vision and 2-way audio for €120.

The next model is a full 360° rotating, 90° up and down, fully waterproof model which can be used indoor or outdoor. It features night colour vision, motion detection, auto tracking, and numerous other features. This camera costs €250.

The most popular model is the solar-powered camera that takes a data SIM card and can be erected anywhere inside or outside; no Wi-Fi or electricity needed. It has all the features, including motion detection and a high-resolution lens.

All cameras come with a 2-year warranty and can be delivered anywhere in Ireland next day.



Gerry Stronge

Gerry explained that after you are finished calving or lambing, the cameras can be moved up to the house and used as security cameras for the rest of the year. It takes about 5 minutes to set up the cameras and 5 minutes to self-install.

With the price of stock, it's a no-brainer for all farmers and security-conscious people.

Gerry Stronge Photography can be contacted on **090 9645455**.



PROPERTY MATTERS

Selling in Ballinasloe - Avoid These Common Mistakes

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New Team for Golf Club Bar & Restaurant

By Maria Connolly

A new chapter has started at the golf club with the launch of THE Nineteenth by Christopher Christians. A talented and experienced chef who has worked in Ireland since 2017, Christopher recently took over the club's bar and restaurant.

Christopher is originally from South Africa and has a wealth of experience in hospitality. He started training at the age of 16 in his native country, completing an apprenticeship before moving on to a four-star hotel and achieving a Diploma in Culinary Arts.

He has since held other roles as Head Chef and Executive Chef, running multiple kitchens in the latter role. Throughout his career, he has worked in varied environments, including corporate catering, private cheffing and private cheffing for VIPs.

"I have always wanted to be a chef... cheffing is my passion," he says. "I enjoy working with produce and creating something that you would enjoy and remember as memories are made around food... I have never stopped learning in the kitchen and every day is growth." However, he says that the industry is not without its challenges. "[It] is constantly testing your ability to adapt, and preparing food is more than what you see on the plate." Christopher adds that the most difficult part of the job is the time spent away from family: "Long shifts are sometimes required to get the job done."

Christopher has also previously worked in town, having previously cheffed in the golf club in 2022. He's happy to be back in town and says: "I believe there is great opportunity here,



Chef Christopher Christians, who has recently taken over the restaurant in Ballinasloe Golf Club.

and it would be great to add value to its community." He adds that the town and people have been very welcoming to him over the years.

With his wealth of experience in different cuisines, he doesn't cook a specific type of food. "I prefer to combine all the different flavours and cuisines into my own style of cooking. It's comfort food with an elegant finish—fresh, real, wholesome flavours."

He is currently seeking another chef to join him: "Someone who is willing to learn and I can pass on some of my expertise." Anyone interested can contact the restaurant on the details below, message Christopher on socials, or email a CV to: justfoodsinnovation@outlook.com

Currently based in Monksland, Christopher is looking forward to moving closer to the restaurant, adding that he prefers countryside living: "I enjoy the space and the views." Outside of work, he enjoys relaxing with his wife and children, and going to the gym.

Opening hours are Monday to Friday 11 am – 11 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9 am – 11 pm. Bookings are recommended for larger groups of six people or more but: "If you have not made a booking we will do our best to accommodate you."

The restaurant is open to the public as well as members, and the bar and restaurant are also available for functions. Christopher is contactable via phone, text or WhatsApp on (089) 276 1169. You can also contact him on Instagram: [@the19th_christopherchristians](https://www.instagram.com/the19th_christopherchristians). THE 19th is also on Facebook.

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Dainty Dandelions: New Main St Florist

By Maria Connolly

Main St has a new florist, Dainty Dandelions, to follow in the footsteps of the much-loved Hills. It's the creation of Marylouise Kelly, a native of Kilconnell. She grew up in the village and attended St Gabriel's and Ardscoil Mhuire.

Her path to floristry was circuitous, with a career including 16 years in retail before she moved to Healthwise Pharmacy in Ballinasloe for five years. She says that being a florist "was never something I intentionally set out to do, but it was a passion that kept growing. I've always had a deep love for flowers and nature", and working in retail had given her a background in customer service, organisation and running a busy shop, skills essential to her new role.

The idea for Dainty Dandelions grew over time, as Marylouise noticed a space in the market for "a modern, creative florist offering bespoke designs and personal service". She adds that: "I wanted to create a space that felt welcoming, creative and inspiring, and to bring something a little different to the town while still being rooted in the community."

Offering a personalised service is one of the values that Marylouise is passionate about. "We can tailor arrangements to suit a person, an occasion, a budget or a colour scheme... people can call in, have a chat, and leave with something truly unique." She adds that "a local independent florist offers something very different from a supermarket bunch. With a florist, customers get quality, freshness and expertise."

Supporting local businesses and the community is also close to Marylouise's heart. Her stock is currently sourced from Holland, allowing her to offer high-quality fresh flowers all year



Marylouise Kelly in her new florists, Dainty Dandelions.

round. However, she is keen to support Irish flower farmers over the spring and summer months. "I love the natural, wildflower look, and supporting local growers is something that's very important to me," she explains. Supporting local "keeps money in the town, supports local jobs, and helps small businesses thrive. For me, it's about offering something special and meaningful, not just convenient."

Over time, Marylouise hopes to grow Dainty Dandelions into "a well-loved local florist that people trust for all of life's moments—from everyday bouquets to weddings and special occasions. I want it to be a creative, welcoming space where customers feel inspired and looked after." She would like to offer workshops and floral classes, as well as expanding the online service. She also hopes to expand staff numbers eventually and train

others in floristry. "My goal is to build a small, friendly team that reflects the warmth and quality of service I want people to experience," she says.

Marylouise would like to thank her parents, Brian and Tina, her brothers, Thomas and Jack, Thomas's partner Ruth, and her aunt Geraldine, who have supported her from day one. "They encouraged me, helped me, and believed in me even when things felt overwhelming. Most importantly, I want to thank my partner, Mark Murphy. Without him, none of this would have been possible. He worked day and night to help make my dream a reality."

Dainty Dandelions is open on Main St from Monday to Saturday, 9.30am–5.00pm. Customers can order by phoning **(087) 349 9360** or emailing **daintydandelions2025@hotmail.com**. You can also find the business on Instagram: **@daintydandelions2025**.

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Gift Business Creating Local Jobs

By Maria Connolly

A local business is continuing to expand, creating employment and producing personalised gifts for customers across Ireland and around the world. The Gift Shop, based at the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre and operated by Gina O'Neill and her husband Eoin, has gone from strength to strength in recent years as demand for personalised gifts continues to grow.



Staff from the Gift Shop pictured outside of Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre. (L-R): Ananda Vishnu, Sudhakaran Nair, Eoin O'Neill, Gina O'Neill, Holly Keighery, Karl Murphy, and Kevin Dowd

Founded by Gina and Eoin over eight years ago, the business began in a spare bedroom in their home. The idea came after Gina was let down by an online company when ordering an engagement gift. Eoin designed and created a personalised gift for her instead, and that moment sparked the idea of starting their own business focused on unique engagement gifts.

From those early beginnings, the business has grown steadily into a thriving gift company employing a local team and delivering gifts to customers across Ireland and around the world. Today, TheGiftShop.ie designs, manufactures and personalises a wide range of gifts for occasions including weddings, engagements, birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas, to name a few. Their expanding range includes personalised mugs, candles, wine, cushions, once-off caricatures, embroidered baby blankets and comforters, gift hampers and keepsake frames, as well as custom engraving on both wood and glass.

Unlike many online retailers, the majority of products are designed, personalised and produced at their base in the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, where the team prepares orders daily. TheGiftShop.ie also works with a number of Irish suppliers and producers and makes a conscious effort to support other local businesses, with a strong preference for stocking Irish-made products wherever possible.

As the business has grown, so too has the team behind it. TheGiftShop.ie now employs a dedicated group of staff who handle production, design, packing and customer service. The team includes: Gina O'Neill, Managing Director; Eoin O'Neill, Design and Creative Director; Karl Murphy, Office Manager; Kevin Dowd, Dispatch and Logistics; Sudhakaran Nair, Head of Chocolate and Ordering

Procurement; Ananda Vishnu, Graphic Designer; and Holly Keighery, Production and Dispatch.

The company remains a family-run business, with Gina's brother Karl and niece Holly also part of the team, reflecting the strong local and family connections behind the growing enterprise.

Speaking about the business, Gina O'Neill said: "We're incredibly grateful for the support we've received from customers locally, across Ireland and from customers around the world. Everything is personalised and produced here in town, and we're proud to continue growing the business while creating local employment. We are also very grateful to the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre. Without the space and the ability to expand as we grow, it would be very difficult for us to continue operating locally and we may have had to move the business out of town."

The business has also continued to invest in new technology and services, including engraving on wood and glass, and making improvements to its website, allowing customers to select their preferred delivery date, along with next-day nationwide delivery through DPD.

Looking ahead, the team plans to continue expanding its personalised product range and developing new gift ideas for customers throughout Ireland and abroad.

Customers can find The Gift Shop online at www.thegiftshop.ie.



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Joe Gibbons Wins Prestigious Award

By Colm Croffy

Joe Gibbons, son of Raymond and Claire of the Pillar House Bar on Society St, recently won the Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers' (IPAV) Novice Rostrum Auctioneer of the Year. The event was hosted by the IPAV Young Professionals Network.

Now in its seventh year, the two-stage competition took place in the iconic sales arena at Tattersalls. The first stage saw the final seven competitors take to the main sales arena, with three finalists progressing to the final

round, a live charity auction in aid of CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young). The finalists auctioned a selection of donated items in front of the judging panel, showcasing their skill, pace and professionalism on the rostrum. After the exciting final, Joe was announced as the overall winner.

The runners-up were Daragh Breathnach and Elliott Potterton, while the first-round competitors included Catherine Mannion Cooney, Padraig Beglin, Sean Murphy and Ciara Lally.

Joe currently works as a Clerical Officer at Ballinasloe Co-op Livestock Mart Society and has done so since 2024. He grew interested in auctioneering from attending the mart when younger. "Even at home in the sitting room, the noise of the TV would often be drowned out by the noise of the mart coming from my dad's phone," he says.

He qualified as an Auctioneer and Property Manager from Galway-Roscommon Education and Training Board in Athenry, but surprisingly, he has not been regularly on the rostrum in the mart. "Before the competition I would have only done one or two stints of 15-20 minutes of relief work to let other auctioneers off for a break," he adds. However, he does say that he has watched other sellers closely to pick up tips.

Joe watched the competition last year and decided to enter this time around in the hopes of getting to experience selling in the historic Tattersalls ring. He was amazed to win the prize. "It means the world; I still can't get over it if I'm completely honest. I was left in disbelief when my name was announced."

As part of his prize, Joe will now attend America's Auction Academy in Dallas, Texas. "It's one of the biggest and most prominent auction academies in the world," he says. "I am really looking forward to going over and improving my skills while also seeing the American style of auctioneering."



Joe Gibbons, winner of the IPAV Professional Rostrum Auctioneer of the Year 2026



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Greenway Project To Town Stalled

By Colm Croffy

The Athlone–Galway cycleway project is still in limbo with progress halted following a review that identified potential biodiversity impacts as well as landowner complications.

A preferred 200km route, announced over two and a half years ago, is now under reconsideration, including the spur line to town.

Cllr Alan Harney recently has called upon The Department of Transport to focus on what is possible and create the cycleway using the public owned land and infrastructure to create the Ballinasloe to Athlone line – perhaps as a “Siege Trail” – given that quite a lot of points on it would have been used by various elements of the Siege of Athlone Castle and Battle of Aughrim.

Many in the original support group – walkers, cyclists, outdoor pursuits fans and those in the tourism and hospitality sector who mounted a very public campaign in 2021 are very despondent that the project will ever see completion at all.

A departmental review completed in August 2024 highlighted environmental and other risks, prompting the current pause. Officials say the councils remain committed to the project but must evaluate these challenges before moving forward.

Questions to Roscommon County Council Engineers and that of Westmeath and Galway Co in recent months have led to some allegations of stone walling or indeed an acceptance that the route chosen was not to be the



one deliverable.

The withdrawal of the key consultancy firm in 2023 has been a major setback and lack of clarity from Dept. of Transport Officials who refuse to second

guess what Roscommon, Westmeath and Galway will do with the review options.

The projects offices are located in the library complex but there is a dearth of public knowledge about what is to happen next and just who is leading on the project – is the Dept of Transport or the consortia of councils who appear to be managing the pre planning stage.?

The official website that was used extensively for public consultations has not been updated in over 24 months.

As of Q 2 no planning application for a major western section (Athlone–Portumna) is expected until around 2028, meaning construction is still several years away. Surely a more local fix could be secured, planned and executed while the other larger/ complicated issues are dealt with?

Snooker Club Update

The Billiards and Snooker Social Club has held a number of events recently. They celebrated Christmas with a showdown between Adam O'Connor and Owen Keighery, and a great crowd gathered on the evening to support the finalists. Adam won and did so by not losing a frame throughout the entire tournament. It was an excellent performance, and a well-deserved first senior victory for Adam. Paul Keighery Interior and Exterior Painters was applauded for its sponsoring of beautiful Christmas hampers.

The Doubles Tournament was recently decided between two strong teams. Gerard Coughlan paired with Shane Keogh and took on local “people’s champion” Barry O'Connor, who had Basil Nally at his side. On the night, the final went the distance with Barry and Basil emerging victorious. The team events are always great fun.

Bernie and all the team in the Emerald Bar were thanked for their generous support to this tournament.

At the time of going to print, the Willie Divilly Billiards Tournament is underway with a great number of entries.

The welcoming club is delighted to be going for over a century, still enjoying the fun and games on and off the green baize. They boast the finest facilities in Connacht and always welcome new members. If you are interested in joining, find the club on Facebook, or call (086) 842 7576.



(L-R): Basil Nally, Referee Jojo Keighery and Barry O'Connor. Barry and Basil won the recent Doubles Tournament.

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Regional Tourism Tour Hits Ahascragh

By Colm Croffy

The East Galway Tourism Activator organised and hosted a successful Regional Discovery Tour in collaboration with tourism colleagues from Roscommon, Longford and Westmeath, which centred around the McAllister's Distillery in Ahascragh.

The event showcased the strength of inter-county collaboration in supporting tourism development across the region and highlighted the diverse visitor experiences available throughout Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

More than 70 tourism businesses and stakeholders attended the event, with strong engagement and participation throughout the day. The itinerary included visits to a number of key visitor attractions across the region, including the Luan Gallery and Sean's Bar in Athlone, Rathcroghan Visitor Centre (managed by Daniel Curley of Taughmaconnell), the Suck Valley Way, Athleague, and Ahascragh Distillery. The tour offered participants a valuable first-hand experience of the rich heritage, culture and tourism offerings available across the participating counties.

The day also provided an excellent opportunity for tourism operators and stakeholders to connect and strengthen relationships; a timely and informative Masterclass in Marketing was given by Niamh Creaven Connaughton of Araya Marketing.

"We were delighted to host the Regional Discovery Tour. It was a fantastic showcase of the great local business owners we have in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Events like this can boost collaboration in our region and help put our more undiscovered corners of Ireland onto the map. A big thanks to Galway County Council and the other councils involved," stated the McAllister family.

The Just Transition Fund continues to play an important role in supporting tourism development in East Galway. Combined



Just Transition Activators for Longford, Roscommon, East Galway and Westmeath: Colm Croffy, Gillian McGarry, Loretta Raftery and Helen DeLacy, pictured with Niamh Creaven Connaughton of Araya Marketing.

with ongoing network development, training initiatives and stakeholder engagement, the programme is helping to build a coordinated and sustainable tourism offering for the region.

Loretta Raftery, Just Transition Fund Tourism Activator with Galway County Council, said: "The Just Transition Fund has provided an important foundation for tourism development in East Galway. Through continued network development, training and stakeholder engagement, we are helping to build a more coordinated and sustainable tourism offering for the region."

Building on this success, the next Regional Discovery Tour is scheduled to take place on 23 May, continuing to strengthen tourism collaboration across the region.

At a local level, the JTF Tourism Activator will also continue to support tourism network development in East Galway. A dedicated East Galway tourism networking event will take place at the end of April (date, time and venue to be confirmed), providing an opportunity for tourism businesses and stakeholders to connect, collaborate and explore opportunities to further develop the visitor offering across the area.

In addition, Galway County Council is currently working in collaboration with and supporting Fáilte Ireland on the East Galway Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP). As part of this process, public consultation sessions will take place in April, with further details on dates and venues to be announced shortly.

For further information in relation to tourism development or the East Galway DEDP, please contact:

Loretta Raftery, Just Transition Fund Tourism Activator, Galway County Council. Email: lraftery@galwaycoco.ie



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Pyjama Day Fundraising Success

By Maria Connolly



Tiny Tots children celebrating the fundraising event.

Tiny Tots Crèche recently held a Pyjama Day fundraiser in support of St. Teresa's Special School, raising an incredible €1,000 for the school playground. The initiative saw children and staff arrive in their pyjamas for a fun-filled day while supporting a very worthy local cause.

The event received fantastic support from the local community, with many businesses generously donating spot prizes for a fundraising raffle. Families played a huge role in the day's success through their donations and participation.

Jennifer Sheridan, owner of Tiny Tots, expressed her gratitude for the support shown: "We are incredibly proud of the children and so thankful to the families and local businesses who supported our Pyjama Day. It's wonderful to see the community come together for such an important cause." The children were especially excited to



Owners Jennifer Sheridan and Caoimhe Manning with Alison Sheahan and St. Teresa's Principal Kieran Stenson.

take part in the initiative, proudly wearing their pyjamas while learning about the importance of kindness, generosity and supporting others in their community. "We feel very fortunate to be part of such a supportive community. The generosity shown by families and local businesses made this fundraiser a huge success, while teaching the children how small acts can make a meaningful difference, and we are proud to be part of that community," commented co-owner Caoimhe Manning.

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Public Speakers Club Gathering Momentum

By Maria Connolly

Ballinasloe Public Speakers' Club held its third meeting in the Business Hub, Society Street. It was wonderful to welcome even more new faces and voices to the club.

Here are some comments/feedback from those who attended on the February night:

- ▶ "There was a lovely warm, welcoming atmosphere."
- ▶ "It was so lovely to hear how others responded to the varied and thought-provoking topics."
- ▶ "The prepared speech that was presented was so heart-warming and the speaker had such a natural, engaging storytelling style."
- ▶ "I was relieved when I heard that I didn't have to stand in front of the whole room to respond to a topic, but maybe I will someday."
- ▶ "You learn something from everybody who steps outside their comfort zone to speak."
- ▶ "Everybody develops the skills at their own pace."
- ▶ "It feels like a very safe space to speak up in."
- ▶ "The feedback you get is so positive, encouraging and constructive."
- ▶ "I wish I had come to a club like this before I had to make a speech at my daughter's wedding."
- ▶ "How lovely it was to chat to people you might not normally meet during the tea break."
- ▶ "Your head would be buzzing with ideas after a meeting."
- ▶ "I'm looking forward to next month's meeting already. I might even put myself forward for a role."

Ballinasloe Public Speakers' Club is open to people from all walks of life and of all ages (from 18-100+) who have an interest in improving their communication, public speaking and leadership skills. However, in the process of attending the meetings, attendees discover that this club is about even more than that. It's about connecting with others, tuning in to and empathising with a wide variety of stories and truly experiencing that everybody



Meeting of the Ballinasloe Public Speakers' Club

has something important and unique to say and contribute.

Whether you're preparing for an upcoming speech at work or at a family or sporting occasion, or simply wish to be part of an empowering, supportive social group, Ballinasloe Public Speakers' Club can certainly help.

The club is aiming to charter with Toastmasters International in the near future. 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", and as mentioned above, Ballinasloe Public Speakers' Club provides this and much more.

One of the club's founding members, Siobhán Keenan Fitzgerald, noted: "It's very exciting to see the club grow from strength to strength, reaching and serving more people from the Ballinasloe area."

The next April meeting will be in the Business Enterprise Hub, Society Street, Ballinasloe (H53 TH24), at 7pm in the last week of the month. All are welcome. We'd love to see you there.

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



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St. Patrick's Day Parade 2026 Celebrates Community, Colour &



Committee For St. Patrick's Day Parade

FRONT ROW: Jim Doherty, Kathleen Croffy, Margaret Clarke, Stanley Clarke, Grand Marshal, Ethel Kelly, Conal Duffy. **BACK ROW:** Tomas Gullane, Johnny Walsh, Niall Clarke, Donal Croffy. **MISSING:** Secretary Carmel Greally



Parade Marshal Stanley Clarke, with his wife Margaret and their Grandchildren

The Ballinasloe St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee has expressed its sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the outstanding success of this year's parade, which saw over 30 floats and entries take to the streets in a vibrant and memorable celebration of community life.

Large crowds gathered throughout the town to enjoy a day filled with colour, music and entertainment. The parade showcased the very best of Ballinasloe, with strong participation from local schools, sports clubs, voluntary organisations, businesses and the many cultures and communities that now form part of the town.

Speaking at St. Michael's Square following the parade, Chairman Johnny Walsh welcomed all in attendance and praised the standard of entries, noting the tremendous effort made across the board. He paid particular tribute to the children who brought great energy and enthusiasm to the day.

Mr. Walsh highlighted the importance of continuing to celebrate Ireland's national feast day through community events such as the parade and acknowledged that the event would not be possible without the continued support of sponsors. He extended sincere thanks to principal sponsor Ballinasloe Credit Union, along with Ballinasloe Vintners, Shearwater Hotel, Gullane's Hotel and Supermac's, as well as the many local businesses, financial institutions and traders who supported the event.

A proud feature of the parade once again was the participation of the Irish Defence Forces Colour Party, and the committee expressed its sincere thanks for their contribution in opening proceedings on the day. The committee also paid tribute to the Ballinasloe Town Band, whose contribution added greatly to the atmosphere of the parade. Ballinasloe is fortunate to have its own town band, and the committee encouraged parents to support and involve their children in the band to help keep that

valued tradition going.

The selection of Stanley Clarke as Grand Marshal was warmly welcomed, with the committee acknowledging his more than 50 years of dedicated service to the town through his significant involvement with the Fair & Festival, Chamber of Commerce and Parade Committee.

Stanley said he was delighted to be asked to serve as Grand Marshal for this year's parade and described it as a real honour. He said he was humbled by the many messages of congratulations he received beforehand, and by the reception he received during the parade itself. He described it as a fantastic experience and one he will never forget, adding that the warmth and support from the people of Ballinasloe made the day truly special for him.

"It was especially lovely to celebrate the occasion with his family, and with his grandchildren in particular. After a lifetime involved in volunteering", he said its value can never be overstated. "Volunteering is at the heart of every strong community, and without people willing to give their time, towns like Ballinasloe would lose so much of what makes them special," noted Stanley.

The committee also expressed its appreciation to An Garda Síochána for their support in ensuring the safe running of the event, along with parade adjudicators Eimear Egan, Eamonn O'Donoghue and Marie Mannion. Thanks were also extended to Secretary Carmel Greally, Niall Clarke, MC Kathleen Croffy, the organising committee, stewards and assembly area teams for their work behind the scenes.

Gratitude was also extended for the use of the Fair and Festival Gig Rig reviewing platform, and to all participants and spectators who contributed to the positive atmosphere throughout the town.





Tradition

By Colm Croffy



Competition Results

In the Window Competition, first place went to Karibas, followed by Tommie Kelly Electrical and Calahans Jewellers.

The Gnó le Gaeilge Award was won by H53 Coffee Shop.

In the parade categories, the Education section had joint winners in Newtown NS, Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh and Scoil an Chroí Naofa. The Culture section was won by Ballinasloe Vintage Club, with Colohans Céilí as runners-up. In the Sporting section, Ballinasloe GAA were winners, with Ballinasloe Rugby Club as runners-up. The Voluntary section was won by Corlann Deerpark Services,

followed by Civil Defence. In the Commercial section, Clarke's Garden Machinery took first place, with Beechlawn Organic Farm as runners-up.

The Tony Colohan Perpetual Cup was awarded to Ballinasloe Vintage Club.

The committee concluded by thanking everyone who took part, attended and supported the parade, noting that the event was a fitting celebration of community spirit and a great showcase for Ballinasloe.



BALLINALSOE LIFE thanks all the brilliant snappers who took great shots on the day that we used here and in our social feeds: Mike Riddell, Martina Flanagan, Evelyn Donnellan, Michael Mc Cullagh



Kiltormer Man Celebrates Turning 90

By Maria Connoll



Tom Egan (fourth from left) with members of the Egan family at his ninetieth birthday party

Tom Egan of Kiltormer recently celebrated his 90th birthday with a wonderful meal in Gullane's Hotel for friends and family. The celebrations continued afterwards in the Hill Bar, Kiltormer.

Tom was born on 7 February 1936 to Catherine and Denny Egan of Kiltormer. He had six siblings—one sister and five brothers—and is the only one still living. He has always been devoted to family and looked after his parents and brothers, providing a home for them anytime they wanted to stay.

He went to school in Kiltormer and, upon finishing, helped various farmers before working in construction. He looked after

the farm at home as well as working full-time before retiring in 2000.

Tom enjoys keeping active, and his hobbies include cycling, gardening, and walking. He also likes a glass of Guinness. He had his first pint at the age of 17, when it cost only 10 pence! He is a man of great faith and has never cursed a day in his life. He is a great neighbour and friend, and his family are so grateful to be able to walk through life with him.

All of his family and neighbours congratulate Tom on an incredible 90-year journey.

World Day of Prayer

The World Day of Prayer was held recently, with a service taking place in St John's Church to mark the occasion. Representatives from several churches in Ballinasloe took part. Archdeacon John Godfrey was joined by Rev. Fr John Garvey from St Michael's Church and Pastor Tim Quinlan from the Ballinasloe Christian Fellowship Church. The service was prepared by the World Day of Prayer Nigeria.

The World Day of Prayer began in the 1900s in the US and Canada, when Christian women initiated a range of cooperative activities to support women's involvement in mission. The event spread worldwide in 1927, with the first Irish services being held in Greystones in 1934.



Congregants at the service held recently to mark the World Day of Prayer

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Darkness Into Light 2026 Walk

By Maria Connolly



The Darkness into Light walk along the Garbally College campus and across town with Participants and Volunteers

The twelfth annual Darkness Into Light fundraising walk for Pieta takes place at 4.15am on Saturday, May 9th.

The walk will depart from the Emerald Ballroom and follow a route up Brackernagh, Mackney, through Coláiste Chluain Fearta (Ardcoil Mhuire Campus and Garbally College Campus), before returning to the Emerald Ballroom via Brackernagh. Register to participate or donate online before the day of the walk at darknessintolight.ie for a special sunrise, to give the gift of hope to those impacted by suicide and self-harm. Help make a

difference, where the difference saves a life.

Darkness Into Light is the flagship fundraising and awareness event for Pieta. It funds the free counselling service for those suffering from suicidal ideation, those bereaved by suicide, and people engaging in self-harm.

All therapists are fully qualified and operate out of 20 Pieta centres nationwide, including those close to Ballinasloe in Galway, Tuam, and Athlone. It funds the 24/7 helpline (1800 247 247) and text service (text HELP to 51444) for those in distress or crisis. It also funds prevention initiatives like the Amber Flag and resilience training for secondary schools.

Darkness Into Light is a fulfilling experience with an important purpose. It is a valuable opportunity for individuals,

groups, and families to come together as a community, to dispel the stigma of suicide, to raise valuable awareness of the help available, and to educate the community about the supports that Pieta offers free to its service users.

Check out and like the Darkness Into Light Ballinasloe Facebook page for up-to-date information.



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ParentChild+ Celebrates 10 Years

By Maria Connolly

Families, staff, and organisations involved in ParentChild+ came together recently to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the programme in town. The programme, which has supported 140 children and families in the area, helps ensure that children enter school ready to learn and with the emotional and social skills they need to be successful in their education.

ParentChild+ was founded in America in the mid-1960s, when psychologist Dr Phyllis Levenstein developed what was then a revolutionary idea of early intervention with families in the home. It is focused on families facing significant obstacles to school and life success, including poverty, low literacy, limited education, language barriers, geographic isolation, and/or homelessness.

Families receive two visits a week from their dedicated Home Visitor. "It's a support visit," explains Sister Helen Diviney, the original Coordinator in Ballinasloe. "Each week a new toy or book is brought in, and it's modelled to the parent - 'this toy is great for colours' - so [the visitors] guide the parents." Sr Diviney adds that, having received support with their first child, parents then know how to support the siblings, so the programme has a cascading effect.

The current Coordinator, Debra Grennan Keighery, adds: "We get to see first-hand how small, consistent moments like reading together, talking, and playing can positively impact a family by strengthening the parent and child bond, building parents' confidence to be more involved in their child's educational years. We promote parents as the child's first and best teachers in the home."



James Applegate, Manager of ParentChild+ Ballinasloe, Shauna Somers and her daughter Emily and Debra Grennan Keighery. Shauna and Emily were former participants in the programme, and Shauna is now Coordinator at the Tuam site.

The programme also has a positive effect on parents. Shannon Cosgrove Soares, one of the parents in the current programme, says: "I was very shy interacting with people and actually it has taught me how to talk to my children, how to read to them... it's been amazing, I'd be lost without Shauna [her home visitor]." Another parent, Christy Cherian, adds that their child didn't "get an opportunity to mix with her peers; she was mostly watching television... we really had a difficulty initially to send her to crèche... and she learned a lot from the programme."

All Home Visitors are employed from their local communities, and many were originally parents on the programme. This has brought considerable value to both the delivery of home visiting and to creating transformational change in the local community.

Debra also started out as a Home Visitor in 2016, before being promoted in 2018. She sees the role of home visitor as "more than a job; it is a calling that blends empathy, experience, and heart to help children and families grow and thrive... As home visitors, we have the privilege of stepping into other families' lives during some of their most important moments, offering guidance, encouragement, and support without judgment."



The ParentChild+ team. (L-R): Yvonne Dunne, Debra Grennan Keighery, Marie Broderick and Diana Popescu.

The programme is run by Galway Rural Development (GRD), working in partnership with the Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland. ParentChild+ is now accepting self-referrals from families in Ballinasloe for the September 2026 term. Contact Debra at debra.grennan@grd.ie or text your name to **087 446 2474**.

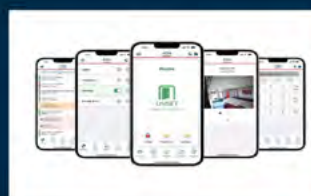
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Community Appeal Against Biogas Plant

By Colm Croffy

A local community group in Ballinasloe is opposing a proposed large biogas plant and gas pipeline planned for Glan Cross, Kellysgrove. The project was previously refused permission by Galway County Council in late January, but the developer, CycleØ, has appealed that decision to An Coimisiún Pleanála – like the other three applications for similar plants round the country.



The Biogas Concern Group contracted professional consultants through their national contacts to compile a scientific appraisal of the grounds for appeal and development of the site.

They reported back to a representative meeting in Gullane's Hotel held in late February and attended by many local representatives in support of the community, including local councillors Alan Harney (Fine Gael), Michael Connolly (Fianna Fáil) and Cllr Evelyn Parsons (Independent).

Key submitted objections in a 222-page report focus on several key issues:

1. Poor Site Choice

The council and the community believe the location is not suitable for a development of this size and nature. It is too close to homes, educational and sports facilities and the nearby town, meaning any negative impacts would directly affect residents.

2. Health and Safety Risks

There are strong concerns about potential dangers, including: increased noise levels; risk of gas leaks, fire, or explosion; possible exposure to harmful substances; and air pollution, including unpleasant smells and risk of water contamination. The appeal provides evidence from other jurisdictions that these risks will affect health and quality of life.

3. Traffic and Road Safety Issues

The proposal relies on large volumes of agricultural waste (around 90,000 tonnes per year), which would mean a significant increase in heavy truck traffic. The appeal report argues that traffic assessments provided are inaccurate and do not properly consider road safety or visibility at junctions.

4. Impact on Local Farming

To supply the plant, large amounts of silage and farm waste would be needed from nearby land. This could change how farms operate in the area, potentially putting pressure on farmers and altering traditional farming practices, especially in the midlands and mid-west – the two-cut silage year and stock on grass for eight months of the year would cease.

5. Problems with the Application Itself

The planning consultants identified several issues with how the project was presented, including: inaccurate or incomplete information; attempts to divide the project into parts to make it appear smaller ("project-splitting"); and proposals affecting private land without permission. These issues raise concerns about the reliability and transparency of the application.

6. Lack of Proper Community Engagement

Residents feel the developer did not properly consult or involve the local community before submitting plans. Many believe the project is being pushed through without fully considering the impact on people living nearby.

The community group argues that, taken together, these concerns show the project is unsuitable and should not be approved. They believe allowing it to proceed could harm residents, disrupt the area, threaten investment and housebuilding in town and hinterland and go against planning rules. One of the key aspects of the Galway County Development Plan has enshrined in it the principle of Environmental Justice for communities who in the recent past suffered enough from health-adverse industries or processes being sited in their midst; this will have to be set aside for the plant to go ahead.

Members of the concern group made an appeal to the community for donations to help cover the increasing campaign costs. The group will keep expanding the awareness campaign as "we are still finding people who aren't aware of what's happening. The impact of this development will be felt within Ballinasloe town itself; it's not just a 'rural problem'," explained a spokesperson.

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A Ukrainian Pensioner 's Perspective Living Locally

Dear Editor,

With the help of your publication, I would like to thank all Irish people and residents of Ballinasloe in particular for your kindness and mercy towards us, residents of Ukraine who fled from the war. With great love, I also write about the people who sheltered us in their home – Andrew and Millie Harbour.

I never thought that in old age I would have to leave my home, my homeland and live far from them. But you do everything to brighten up our ordeal. Your support and friendly smiles mean a lot to us.

I will tell you a little about myself. I am a pensioner and the right to free travel around the country gives me the opportunity to get to know Ireland better. I have already visited 60 settlements and tourist sites. I collect information about them in museums and on the Internet, add my impressions and photographs and post these notes on my Facebook page. Thanks to this, many Ukrainians can discover this country without leaving their home.

In Ballinasloe there is a village of modular houses where our fellow countrymen live. Many of them had to live in basements and bomb shelters, hiding from the bombs of the aggressor country. Children were robbed of a carefree childhood, the elderly of a peaceful old age, and the young of prospects. Together with other Jehovah's Witnesses who speak Ukrainian or Russian, we visit these people and share with them the biblical hope for a better future that lies ahead. And today they have the opportunity to work for the good of Ireland, teach children, and receive medical care.

For many, especially the elderly, the insufficient knowledge of English is still an obstacle. We grew up in the USSR behind the Iron Curtain, where there was no motivation to learn foreign languages. There were almost no foreign companies on the territory of the Soviet Union, going abroad even on a tourist trip was problematic, most of our English teachers did not intern



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in English-speaking countries with native speakers. Besides, we studied British English at school, and Irish English has some peculiarities that you still need to get used to. Also, the Irish speak very quickly (just like we do in our native language), and I am grateful to them for the patience with which they listen to our incorrectly formulated phrases and try to understand us. We also try to understand them, but the friendly smile of the Irish helps us find a common language even with poor knowledge of English.

Many thanks for the patience of our English teacher on the courses, Jenny O'Connor. Her humour and clear explanations help us master English and try to speak it!

I sincerely wish prosperity to the town of Ballinasloe and its residents, as well as to all the Irish people.

Sincerely,

Olha Ivanova.



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PUH Concerns Advanced to Oireachtas Committee

By Colm Croffy

Concerns regarding maternity services at Portiuncula University Hospital (PUH) have been advanced to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health, following consideration by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Public Petitions and the Ombudsman.

The Petitions Committee also recommended that the Portiuncula Maternity Alliance (PMA) be offered the opportunity to present its concerns at an oral hearing before the Health Committee, bringing the issue under detailed national parliamentary scrutiny.

The petition was lodged on behalf of PMA by Independent Ballinasloe councillor, Cllr Evelyn Parsons, ensuring that the concerns of families and communities served by Portiuncula University Hospital were formally entered into the parliamentary record.

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Albert Dolan (Fianna Fáil), who was himself born at PUH, reflecting the strong connection many families across the region have with the hospital. National representatives Deputy Martin Daly (Fianna Fáil), Deputy Louis O'Hara (Sinn Féin), and Deputy Pat Buckley (Sinn Féin) also addressed the Committee, highlighting the broad cross-party concern surrounding the future of maternity services at Portiuncula.

The issue has generated significant public mobilisation following the announcement of changes to the maternity service in July 2025. In the following months, more than 15,000 people signed a public petition and approximately 3,500 people marched through the streets of Ballinasloe calling for the protection of maternity services at the hospital.

The PMA has consistently raised concerns about changes which broadened the category of higher-risk maternity care. As a



The Portiuncula Maternity Alliance float in the St. Patricks Day Parade

result, a proportion of women who would previously have received their maternity care at Portiuncula are now being directed to other hospitals.

The PMA said the forthcoming Joint Oireachtas Health Committee engagement will provide an opportunity for the voices of mothers and families to be heard and for the public to see clearly the significance and importance of the issues involved, particularly for the large rural population served by Portiuncula University Hospital across eight counties.

The PMA noted that the National Maternity Strategy is currently under

review, and said the issues raised in relation to Portiuncula therefore have national importance at a time when the future structure of maternity services across the country is being considered.

Ireland has 19 maternity units, including 11 smaller maternity units like PUH, and the Alliance said developments affecting one such unit may set an important precedent for how maternity services in similar hospitals are supported and protected across the country.

"The consideration of this petition at Leinster House is an important step in ensuring that the concerns of families and communities who rely on PUH are examined openly and transparently," said Cllr Parsons.

"This is an important opportunity for the voices of parents, families and communities who rely on Portiuncula University Hospital to be heard at parliamentary level," said Dr Kevin Connolly, Chair of the PMA.

The PMA community welcomed that the hearing will provide an opportunity to examine the impact of the changes on families across the region and to set out a pathway for the safe restoration and future protection of maternity services at Portiuncula.

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Community Salutes Singaporean Contribution

By Pat Johnston

We are used to our own people emigrating and returning from foreign parts, but this last month saw us losing one of our best all-round educators as Sr. Regina de Roza returned to her native Singapore after years of dedicated service to the Garbally community.

In February 2007, Fr Niall Foley, who celebrated daily Mass at Portiuncula Franciscan Convent, learned that Sr. Regina had come from the UK, where she had been Chaplain at St Edmund's, Portsmouth, and had previously taught at St Mary of the Angels in Nathalia, Australia, and Catholic College Bendigo in Australia. She also spent three years managing a Teen Centre in Singapore run by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

So she came to Garbally with lots of experience and had to adapt quickly to our less than Singaporean attitude to rules and regulations – "I will, yea!". Her charm, openness, curiosity and sense of fun endeared her quickly to us all. No doubt her interest in sport and her extensive knowledge of international football was a help, and this also made her a valuable member of many a quiz team. She will also be missed for her occasional presentation of dishes from her culture, such as fried rice, noodles, satay, spring rolls, curry and prawn crackers.

Regina worked under three principals: Seamus O'Brien, Stephen Reilly and Paul Walsh. She started in a pastoral role and did home visits with Mary Hillary (then Visiting Teacher). These home visits extended to other families, where the focus had been to encourage students to attend school, to work with other lads to re-integrate after some disciplinary issues,

and to provide appropriate pastoral support.

Later she taught RE for the Junior



Sr. Regina de Roza FMDM and Bishop Deignan at St. Josephs Day Awards, some years ago.

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Cycle, and when some students opted to study RE for the Leaving Cert, her timetable was arranged so that she would be free when the RE classes were scheduled, allowing these students to be withdrawn and study with her for their Leaving Cert as an academic subject.

In addition to teaching, she also provided counselling where appropriate and, when required, used a restorative action approach to help resolve disputes. Sr. Regina always acknowledged the support of her teaching colleagues in facilitating her pastoral work with students.

Jacqui Daly had run the Breakfast Club since 2010. Sr. Regina assisted and continued when Jacqui finished in 2015.

Funding came firstly from the DSP and then Galway Rural Development, obtained by Seamus O'Brien, and later again from SVP and her Franciscan Congregation at Portiuncula. In the Breakfast Club, she found that students were more open to expressing their concerns as they felt comfortable in the informal setting. Some students would not have had any breakfast or any funds for lunch breaks; others found the TY students and some LC students helpful with their homework. As the Club was open to all, some barriers were broken and new friendships were made. There was also the occasional student who was glad for breakfast as they had overslept and had no time to eat at home!

Simple rules were implemented: basically, respect at all times for each other. Students were also expected to clean up, rinse and place their plates, cups and utensils in the dishwasher. She was greatly amused by the occasional parent who came to her during Parent/Teacher meetings to say thanks for teaching their sons how to pack the dishwasher!

Learning that some lads could not register for Night Study for financial reasons, or because they needed some help with their homework, Sr. Regina started the Homework Club in 2010 and was greatly helped by TY students and also some Senior Cycle students. They gave their time and helped the students with homework. The use of the computer was also permitted under supervision. Students were permitted to work with each other as long as they maintained the usual classroom discipline.

Sr. Regina, who in the words of our late principal, Michael Hyland, was a "sound" woman, says that she thoroughly enjoyed her time in Ballinasloe and made many friends. This made her departure difficult, although she is happy to be transferring home. She says that, as well as Ballinasloe, she will miss the many beautiful and peaceful places that she visited – Connemara; Kerry; Cork; Tipperary; Donegal; Glendalough. She will not name a particular favourite as "each has its own beauty and attraction".

She will miss the sense of fun and Irish humour from both her colleagues and the students. "My favourite memory was when I was trying to encourage the First Years to speak Irish. I said to them that for every Irish word I said, they were to give me 40. So I said 'Dia daoibh' and they were to give me 80 words in Irish and they were not allowed to just count! They struggled, and along came a Leaving Cert student who, on hearing what had to be done, literally said, 'Ochto focal'. So I had to give him the chocolates! But he did share them with the First Years."

Sr. Regina was awarded the inaugural Founding Vision honour by Bishop Michael Duignan on St Joseph's Day 2022. This was surely a testament to her great contribution to the college, a legacy that will long be remembered. While she will be seen as an "elder" in Singapore, she does not intend to retire, and after a well-earned sojourn with her family, she will spend time immersing herself in the many minority languages in Singapore as she looks forward, as always, to helping those who need her most.




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Glebe NS Celebrates World Book Day

By Maria Connolly



Pupils from The Glebe National School on World Book Day.

A very well-behaved Denis the Menace arriving into class with a Midnight Fairy signalled the start of another successful World Book Day celebration at Aughrim's Glebe National School. Crunchy Croc, the Gruffalo's Child, and a goose named Katerina were among the fantastic creatures that pupils brought to life by dressing up as them.

"It was wonderful to see pupils so enthusiastic about sharing their love of books and reading with others. Pupils took part in shared reading activities with their classmates, discussing their favourite books and discovering new stories," Lisa Fenton, School Principal, said.

Parents and other family members were invited to be guest readers on the day. They chose a favourite book to read to pupils. "It is a joy as a parent to come into the classroom and witness how the teaching staff encourage children to read books," Dr Róisín Mulqueen, one of the parents, said.

"School staff take time to get to know each child, their gifts and

needs, and how best they learn. They have carefully nurtured our two primary-aged children, a boy and a girl, and they both love it there," Dr Mulqueen added.

"The Glebe's excellent pupil-teacher ratio is typically only something that my UK medical colleagues can access if they can afford really expensive private schooling. The Glebe is free and open to everyone."

The school welcomes enrolment enquiries at any time of the year and can offer places to children of primary school age in all classes.

A local after-school childcare service and a bus service are available to pupils. The school's website is www.theglebens.com and they can be contacted by email at theglebens@gmail.com or by phone on (090) 967 3650.



Laura Rice-Fenlon, parent and guest reader at The Glebe National School on World Book Day



Dr Róisín Mulqueen and her daughter at The Glebe National School's celebration of World Book Day.

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Creagh NS Raises €9,730 From St. Brigid's Day

By Maria Connolly

Pupils at Creagh National School were extremely busy in the lead-up to St Brigid's Day, crafting thousands of St Brigid's Crosses from rushes as part of their annual fundraising effort. Demonstrating great dedication, the children gave up their lunchtime breaks to make the crosses in the school hall.



Pupils selling the St Brigid's Crosses outside Dolan's Service Station



Reveal of the total raised at the presentation of cheques

The handmade crosses were sold for €2 in local shops, businesses, parents' workplaces, after local masses and at the GAA bingo. This marked the fifteenth year of the fundraiser, and it proved to be a record-breaking success, with a total of €9,730 raised. The funds were shared between Ballinasloe Social Services and the school. Creagh National School will use its portion to enhance maths and digital technology resources for pupils.

Accompanied by their teachers, Regina Power and Antoinette Blade, the children proudly presented the funds to both organisations. Following the presentation, nearly 200 pupils enjoyed a well-deserved pizza party and disco in celebration of their achievement.



Ms O'Rourke, Deputy Principal at Creagh NS, receives a cheque from two pupils.

Taoiseach Visits Scoil an Chroí Naofa

Scoil an Chroí Naofa is celebrating following its inclusion in tranche one of the National Development Plan. Schools on this list will go to tender and/or construction for new buildings in 2026 and 2027. The school was delighted to welcome An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, to the school, where he met and spoke with students and teachers to confirm the news. The school's campaign for a new building is the longest-running public build in the state. Scoil an Chroí Naofa was first promised a new school building in June 2001, when a design team was appointed. Every other school building project from the same period has now been completed. The school has worked tirelessly in recent years to ensure that the project moves forward, organising a petition, campaigns on social media, and appearing in national media. They would like to thank a number of local political representatives, including Cllr Alan Harney, former Senator Aisling Dolan, Martin Daly TD (Fianna Fáil), and Claire Kerrane TD, for their support for the campaign over recent years. The school also expressed thanks to all those in the community who have supported the campaign.



An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, on his recent visit to Scoil an Chroí Naofa.



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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.

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Tom Kelly and Dermot Connolly at the recent Medtech Rising event held in Galway. Tom had just been presented with the "Outstanding Contribution to Medtech award".



Gerry Seale recently celebrated his 70th birthday with his family in the Shearwater Hotel.

GALWAY DRUM SHOW



LEFT TO RIGHT: Nic Collins (Son of iconic Singer / Drummer Phil Collins) and Ben Parker (Ballinasloe)



Lorcan Mitchell (on the left) with Nic Collins (Son of iconic Singer / Drummer Phil Collins)



Laurie & Martha Rose Ward at the Corlann Services Valentine's Ball in the Shearwater Hotel

PÁDRAIG PEARSES' SUCCESS IN SCÓR SINSIR FINALS



Fionnán Seale, 1st place in Solo Singing in the Co. Roscommon Scór Sinsir final.



Tom Costello with Thomas Murray, Chairperson of Roscommon County Board, at the Scór Sinsir Finals.



Ballinasloe-native Damian Mac Con Uladh is President of the Greek-Irish Society. The society's St Patrick's Gala Ball was attended by US Ambassador to Greece Kimberly Guilfoyle, whose father was from Ennis, Co. Clare. Guilfoyle is a close political ally of Donald Trump and the partner of his son, Donald Trump Jr.

The Co. Roscommon Scór Sinsir Finals took place recently, and Pádraig Pearses were successful in two categories. Tom Costello received first place in Recitation, while Fionnán Seale received first place in Solo Singing. These very gifted County Champions will soon be participating in the Scór Sinsir Connacht Final in Tubbercurry. Congratulations to both. Go n-éir an t-ádh libh!



Dunlo Hill resident Maureen Watters, retired community educator, committed Gaeilgeoir, Mamo and Nanna to over 23 grandkids, had a special 80th birthday party celebration last month in Gullanes Hotel. Lá breithe shona duit, a Mháirín! Go maire tú an céad!



The Frontline Appreciation Night in Ryan's Bar back in January raised €1,000 for the East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support. We are so lucky to have these wonderful people and amazing service in our locality.

Thank you all for your support, and a special thank you to Conor and all the Ryan family for hosting and making a generous donation to round off the amount raised by frontline workers, families and supporters on the night.

Drummers and Haka-teers from Corlann, Deerpark Services, Ballinasloe (formerly the Brothers of Charity).



Staff and service users from Corlann, Deerpark Services. L-R: Damien Clarke (Slua Nua Music Co-ordinator), Kieran Willmore, Paul Cawley, Henry McLoughlin, Harry Lloyd, Rachel Lyons, Patrick McDermott, Fergal Egan, Adam Clogher, Michelle Garvey, John Joseph, Conor Flaherty, Karen Breen, Ilya Manning and James Murphy. Missing from the photo are Triona Larkin, Shane McDermott and Declan Briscoe.



Creagh NS U13 Winner: Sean Madden Chair, BCU, Adrian Ahearne, Director BCU, Iarlaith Hurley, John Brady, Paul Og Flynn, Patrick Kenny, Aine Bleahen Principal, Shane Mc Neill, BCU Management



Newtown National School U11 2nd place: Sean Madden Chair, BCU, Michael Mc Court, Eanna Loughnane, AJ Howley, Ryan Mc Murrow, A Murphy, Teacher, Adrian Ahearne BCU Director



Creagh NS U11 3rd: Sean Madden Chair, BCU Senan Flynn, Hollie Quinn, Keelan McKeon, Arham Muhammad, Aine Bleahen Principal, Adrian Ahearne BCU Director



Cllr Alan Harney and Edal Browne recently got engaged. Edal is originally from Athenry and is a Senior Project Manager in the medical devices industry locally. She is also a member of the Board of the University of Galway Business School, focusing on regional development, a director of the University Foundation and a member of the NUI Senate.



The Men in Green! - Connacht Rugby's, Paul Boyle & AJ Howley, Moher, Ballinasloe. Son of Jason & Laura Howley, and a pupil at Newtown National School, AJ was Connacht's player mascot at DEXCOM stadium on March 13th when they beat Scarlets, 31-14



Ballinasloe Credit Union was delighted to sponsor Ballinasloe Musical Society. Pictured is Seán at the launch with some of the cast of Shrek, the society's 2026 production which ran to great houses in the last few days of March.



Musical Society Treasurer Frances Leahy, AIMS National President Gerry Sweeny, Sean Madden and Lisa Whyte, Chair of Ballinasloe Musical Society, at the launch night of this year's show.

APRIL EVENTS GUIDE

April 1, Wednesday

French Conversation	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. Music	9pm	An Táin

April 2, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10am - 11am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Ciorcal Comhrá	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Holy Thur. - Lords Supper	6pm	Sacred Heart Ch. Kilconnell
Mass of the Lords Supper	7pm	St. Mary's Ch., Ballydangan
Holy Thur. - Lords Supper	7pm	St Catherine's Ch., Aughrim
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
H. Thurs. Mass - Lords Sup.	8pm	St Michaels Church
Trad & Folk Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

April 3, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am - 1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler / Baby Gr.	10.30am - 12pm	Family Comm. Res. Centre
Good Fri. Stations Cross	12pm	St Michael's Church
Good Fri. - Lord's Passion	3pm	St Catherine's Ch. Aughrim
Good Friday Ceremonies	3pm	O. Lady of Rosary, Clonfad
The Celeb. Lord's Passion	3pm	St Michael's Church
Kids Easter Disco	3pm - 5pm	Shearwater Hotel
Good Fri. Lord's Passion	4pm	Sacred Heart Ch. Kilconnell
Stations around the Cross	7pm	St Michael's Church
Stations of the Cross	7pm	St. Mary's Ch., Ballydangan
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar
Adam & Sean	10pm	Brewery Lane

April 4, Saturday

Kpop Superslayers	6.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
Easter Vigil Mass	7pm	St. Mary's Ch., Ballydangan
Holy Saturday Mass	7pm	Sacred Heart Ch., Kilconnell
Easter Vigil Mass	8pm	St Michael's Church
The CEOs	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Colum Carroll	10pm	Millars Bar
Tongue & Groove	10pm	Joes Bar

April 5, Sunday

Easter Sunday Mass	9am	St Michael's Church
Easter Sunday Mass	10am	O. Lady of Rosary, Clonfad
Easter Sunday Mass	10.30am	O. Lady of Lourdes, Creagh
Holy Communion	10.30am	St John's Church
Easter Sunday	10am	Sacred Heart Ch. Kilconnell
Easter Sunday	11am	St Catherine's Ch., Aughrim
Easter Mass	11.30am	St. Mary's Ch., Ballydangan
Easter Sunday Mass	12pm	St Michael's Church
Live Trad. Music	6pm	An Táin
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Derek Ryan	9pm	Shearwater Hotel
Red Tape	10pm	Brewery Lane
John Finnerty	10pm	Joes Bar
High Reel	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

April 6, Monday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
B. Act. Ret Knitting session	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Retir. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom
Bsloe Active Ret Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom

April 7, Tuesday

Breastfeeding Sup. Group	10am-11.30am	Youth Work, Marina Point
Learn English w/ F. Isteach	11.15am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Ballinasloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

April 8, Wednesday

French Conversation	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Retir. Book Club	11:30am	Bsloe Library
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. and Folk Music	9pm	An Táin

April 9, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10am - 11am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Ciorcal Comhrá	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Trad and Folk Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

April 10, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am - 1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler/Baby Gr.	10.30am - 12pm	Family Comm. Res. Centre
Pa Shiel	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

April 11, Saturday

Leathaca Exhibition	2.30pm	Bsloe Library
Katie Henshaw & M. Flynn	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
DJ Colm	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Music	10pm	Millars Bar
Landslide	10pm	Joes Bar

April 12, Sunday

Live Trad. and Folk Music	6pm	An Táin
Adrian Hiney	6.30pm	Joes Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens

April 13, Monday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Knitting session	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Retir. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom
Bsloe Active Ret Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom

April 14, Tuesday

Learn English w/ F. Isteach	11.15am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Ballinasloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

April 15, Wednesday

Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. and Folk Music	9pm	An Táin

April 16, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10am - 11am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Ciorcal Comhrá	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
SEAI Grant Advice	11.30am	Bsloe Library
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Trad and Folk Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

April 17, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am - 1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler and Baby Group	10.30am - 12pm	Family Comm. Res. Centre

Canal Bar David Connor	7pm	Shearwater Hotel
Andy Feery	9pm	Shearwater Hotel
Robbie	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar
Hermitage Green	10.30pm	Lukers Bar, Shbridge
Michael English	11pm	Shearwater Hotel

April 18, Saturday

Canal Bar Paddy Treacy	7pm	Shearwater Hotel
John Mollay	9pm	Shearwater Hotel
Beggars Velvet	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Music	10pm	Millars Bar
Joe Flynn	10pm	Joes Bar
Fionnan Seale	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar
Jimmy Buckley	11pm	Shearwater Hotel

April 19, Sunday

Stephen Smyth	2pm	Shearwater Hotel
Mike Denver	4pm	Shearwater Hotel
Live Trad. and Folk Music	6pm	An Táin
Fabe Mills	6.30pm	Joes Bar

Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Sunday Night Dance	8pm	Shearwater Hotel

April 20, Monday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Knitting	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Retir. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom
Bsloe Active Ret Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Step Stage Shool Showcase	7pm	Town Hall Theatre
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom

April 21, Tuesday

Learn English w/F. Isteach	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Step Stage Shool Showcase	7pm	Town Hall Theatre
B. Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Ballinasloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

April 22, Wednesday

French Conversation	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
Step Stage Shool Showcase	7pm	Town Hall Theatre
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. and Folk Music	9pm	An Táin

April 23, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10am - 11am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Ciorcal Comhrá	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Step Stage Shool Showcase	7pm	Town Hall Theatre
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Trad and Folk Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

April 24, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler/Baby Gr.	10.30am - 12.00pm	Family/Comm. Res. Centre
Step Stage Shool Showcase	7pm	Town Hall Theatre
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar
Down The Road	10pm	Brewery Lane

April 25, Saturday

Spring 2026 'Town Talks'	2.30pm	Bsloe Library
Step Stage Shool Showcase	7pm	Town Hall Theatre
Meet The Fawkers	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Music	10pm	Millars Bar
Blue Orchid	10pm	Joes Bar
Rhythm & Keys	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

April 26, Sunday

Live Trad. and Folk Music	6pm	An Táin
Pa Shiel	6pm	Brewery Lane
Boogie Men	6.30pm	Joes Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens

April 27, Monday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am-2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Knitting	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Retir. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom
Bsloe Active Ret Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
IKKI Karate Training	7 - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom

April 28, Tuesday

Learn English w/F. Isteach	11.15am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Ballinasloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

April 29, Wednesday

French Conversation	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. and Folk Music	9pm	An Táin

April 30, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10am - 11am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Ciorcal Comhrá	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Adult Book Club *New*	11.30am	Bsloe Library
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Trad and Folk Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

MAY EVENTS GUIDE

May 1, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am - 1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler/Baby Gr.	10.30am - 12pm	Family Comm. Res. Centre
Jukebox John	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar
Shane Moore	10pm	Joes Bar

May 2, Saturday

Meet The Fawkers	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Split The G	10pm	Joes Bar
Joe Gibbons	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

May 3, Sunday

Live Trad. and Folk Music	6pm	An Tain
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
Live in the Marquee - Boyzlife	8pm	JJ Killeens
DJ Colm	10pm	Brewery Lane
Nightowls	10pm	Millars Bar

May 4, Monday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Knitting	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Retir. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom
Bsloe Active Ret Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom

May 5, Tuesday

Breastfeeding Support Group	10am - 11.30am	Youth Work, Marina Point
Learn English w/F. Isteach	11.15am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Ballinasloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

May 6, Wednesday

Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. and Folk Music	9pm	An Tain

May 7, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10am - 11am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Giorcal Comhrá	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Trad & Folk Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

May 8, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am-1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler/Baby Gr.	10.30am - 12pm	Family Comm. Res. Centre
Down The Road	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

May 9, Saturday

Darkness Into Light Walk	4.15am	McNevin Avenue
The Gathering Art Group	2.30pm	Bsloe Library
AKT Stage School Showcase	TBC	Town Hall Theatre
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
3 Men & a Bass	10pm	Brewery Lane
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Music	10pm	Millars Bar
Tongue & Groove	10pm	Joes Bar
Shea	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

May 10, Sunday

AKT Stage School Showcase	TBC	Town Hall Theatre
Dave Mills	6.30pm	Joes Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
DJ Colm	8pm	Brewery Lane
Pa Shiel	10pm	Brewery Lane

May 11, Monday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
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Bsloe Active Ret Knitting	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Retir. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom
Bsloe Active Ret Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom

May 12, Tuesday

Learn English w/F. Isteach	11.15am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Ballinasloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

May 13, Wednesday

Social Bridge	11am-1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Retir. Book Club	11:30am	Bsloe Library
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. and Folk Music	9pm	An Tain

May 14, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10am - 11am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Giorcal Comhrá	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Trad & Folk Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

May 15, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am - 1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler/Baby Gr.	10.30am - 12.00pm	Family Comm. Res. Centre
DJ Colm	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

May 16, Saturday

10-Year Anniversary Celeb.	Morning	Bsloe Library
Beggars Velvet	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Music	10pm	Millars Bar
Some Craic	10pm	Joes Bar
Trevor Cavanagh	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

May 17, Sunday

BARA Concert 20 Year Celb.	4pm	Town Hall Theatre
Pa Shiel	6pm	Brewery Lane
Landslide	6.30pm	Joes Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
DJ Colm	8pm	Brewery Lane

May 18, Monday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Ret Knitting	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Retir. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom
Bsloe Active Ret Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom

May 19, Tuesday

Learn English w/F. Isteach	11.15am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Ballinasloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

May 20, Wednesday

French Conversation	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Social Bridge	11am-1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
IKKI Karate Training	7 - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. and Folk Music	9pm	An Tain

May 21, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10am - 11am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Giorcal Comhrá	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Trad & Folk Session	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

May 22, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am - 1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler/Baby Gr.	10.30am - 12.00pm	Family Comm. Res. Centre

Brenda Larkin Comedy Show feat John Collerary	Doors open 7.30pm	Brewery Lane
Robbie	10pm	Brewery Lane
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

May 23, Saturday

Grapevine	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Alex Roe	10pm	Millars Bar
Joe Flynn	10pm	Joes Bar
Kevin Barrett	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

May 24, Sunday

Pa Shiel	6pm	Brewery Lane
Boogiemien	6.30pm	Joes Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
DJ Colm	8pm	Brewery Lane

May 25, Monday

Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Bsloe Active Retir. Bowling	10.30am - 12.30pm	Emerald Ballroom
Bsloe Active Ret Knitting	10.30am - 12.30pm	Gullane's Hotel
Bsloe Active Ret Aerobics	2pm - 3pm	Coral Leisure Centre
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom

May 26, Tuesday

Learn English w/F. Isteach	11.15am	Bsloe Library
B. Active Ret Aqua Aerobics	7pm - 8pm	Coral Leisure Centre
Bridge Club	7.30pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Ballinasloe GAA Bingo	8pm	Emerald Ballroom

May 27, Wednesday

French Conversation	11am - 12pm	Gullanes Hotel
Social Bridge	11am - 1pm	Bridge Rooms, Sarsfield Rd
Crafty Girls Craft Group	11:15am	Bsloe Library
Baby/Toddler Rhyme Time	11:30am	Bsloe Library
IKKI Karate Training	7pm - 8pm	Emerald Ballroom
Live Trad. and Folk Music	9pm	An Tain

May 28, Thursday

Yoga with Ju	10:00am - 11:00am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Giorcal Comhrá	11:00am - 12:00pm	Gullanes Hotel
Inter. Women's Group	11.15am	Bsloe Library
Adult Book Club	11.30am	Bsloe Library
Beginners Tennis	7pm - 8pm	Bsloe Tennis Club
Trad & Folk Session	9pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

May 29, Friday

Yoga with Ju	7.30am - 8.30am	Upstairs at Jorena's Shop
Indoor Country Market	9am - 1pm	Social Services Centre
Men's Shed Meeting	10am - 2pm	Cullens Yard, Main St
Parent, Toddler/Baby Gr.	10.30am - 12.00pm	Family Comm. Res. Centre
Deirdre O'Kane	Doors open 7pm	Shearwater Hotel
Find The Joker	10pm	An Tain Bar

May 30, Saturday

The CEOs	10pm	Brewery Lane
Live Music	10pm	JJ Killeens
Pub Music	10pm	Fallons Bar
Music	10pm	Millars Bar
Blue Orchid	10pm	Joes Bar

May 31, Sunday

Joe Kavanagh	6.30pm	Joes Bar
Live Music	7pm	JJ Killeens
DJ Colm	10pm	Brewery Lane
High Reel	10pm	Gibbons Pillar House Bar

PLEASE SUPPORT WHERE YOU CAN, THOSE BUSINESSES & ADVERTISERS THAT SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY

To Advertise Your Events here please contact ballinasloelifereporter@gmail.com or call 09096 45831 and leave a voice message. We will be back to confirm by 11th May.



PUH Hospital Watch

By Colm Croffy

Portiuncula University Hospital continues to improve the facilities for staff and patients.

Eighteen new beds have been opened since 2024, leading to a substantial reduction in the number of patients waiting on trolleys. At the HSE Regional Health Forum West, the service confirmed that the number of people waiting for a bed in PUH was reduced by 33% in 2024, and 26% in 2025. The reductions have been achieved even as the numbers presenting at the emergency department in 2025 grew by 20%.

The positive pattern had continued for 2026, too. At the time of going to press, there were 24 days this year when there were no patients waiting on trolleys at 8am (when the trolley statistics are compiled), and there have been only three days where patients have had to wait more than 24 hours for a bed.

Other improvements include a newly refurbished paediatric playroom that provides a safe and child-friendly space for children. The space has been redesigned with a strong focus on therapeutic play and includes a soft sensory pod to support children with additional needs. Robyn Burns, Play Therapist, said: "We're already seeing the impact of the refurbished space, with laughter and play bringing a brighter and more uplifting atmosphere to the unit."

The hospital has introduced two new Wellness Walkways designed to support patients' health and wellbeing during recovery from illness and injury. The walkways, which are linked to Garbally Ward and Orchard Ward, feature a series of stations offering a range of physical and cognitive exercises. These stations provide patients with opportunities to engage in



Sarah Ennis, who has recently been appointed as an Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Oncology at PUH

gentle movement and mental stimulation, supporting physical rehabilitation and cognitive wellbeing within a safe and therapeutic environment.

The hospital also recently announced the appointment of an Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Oncology. Sarah Ennis is responsible for the assessment, diagnosis and management of patients receiving oral anti-cancer therapies. She provides care to patients with a wide range of cancers, including breast, ovarian, colorectal, prostate, lung, brain and neuroendocrine cancers, and works closely with two Consultant Medical Oncologists in dedicated Medical Oncology Clinics. Sarah said: "Advanced nursing practice demonstrates the impact highly skilled nurses can have when working autonomously to deliver expert, patient-centred care. My goal is to develop a nurse-led early breast cancer

survivorship clinic, enabling patients to access high-quality follow-up care closer to home."

Further improvements are planned, with the recent announcement that the hospital had received planning permission for an extension to the accident and emergency department that will enhance patient comfort and safety. The new building will provide nine new patient cubicles, a gynaecology treatment room, an accessible reception area, and associated staff and clinical support facilities.

The existing emergency department will undergo a series of phased internal refurbishment works to provide additional patient treatment cubicles, reconfigured storage and staff support facilities, and modernised staff changing facilities.

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Town Hall Theatre Undergoes Upgrade

By Colm Croffy

The Town Hall Theatre recently underwent a luxurious upgrade to its seats and stage curtain. The work was undertaken by The Upholstery Company in Roscommon, who removed, reupholstered and replaced every one of the 400 seats in just under three weeks. The works were covered by a grant of over €47,000 for the upgrade and stonework repairs from the Community Centre Investment Fund in 2025.



New stage curtain



New seats

Replacing the worn and faded seats was a long-term project for the Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre Committee, as there were always “more pressing issues to deal with”, Chairperson Máire Hughes said. “Re-roofing to prevent constant leaks, upgrading restroom facilities and the heating system and so on—and, of course, how to afford all the work and maintenance required by an old building such as this.” Other improvements made since a voluntary committee took over the running of the theatre in 2009 include the installation of new windows and doors, a redesign of the foyer, and investments in the sound and lighting systems.

The seats date back to pre-1975, when the building was used as the Plaza cinema, while it's thought that the curtain could have been installed when the business was taken over by the Aisling Cinema in 1975. “It could potentially be even older than that,” Máire added. “A member of Ballinasloe Musical Society has memories of peeking out at the audience through a hole in it, and her last on-stage performance with the group was in 1981, so it is at least that old.” Parts of the previous curtain will be kept for display in the building to honour what came before.

The theatre has an exciting programme of events coming up.

Ballinasloe Musical Society will be the first group to perform in the upgraded space, presenting *Shrek* from March 25–28.

In Step Stage School will then be performing their annual showcase from April 20–25, nightly at 7pm. The students have all been rehearsing hard for weeks and promise an evening full of vibrant colour, high energy, and magical performances that you will not want to miss! And to celebrate their end of term, the students of Athenry and Ballinasloe AKT Stage School will take to the stage to showcase their amazing talents in an exciting variety performance on May 9 and 10 (times TBC).

Finally, join BARA Singers on Sunday May 17 at 4pm for an afternoon of song as they celebrate their 20th year! This concert will be their 12th annual Songfest production, featuring special guests Ballinasloe Town Band, The Grey Lake String Quartet and soprano Rachel Goode. It will also feature a tribute to La Prima Donna Margaret Burke Sheridan.

The theatre is open for bookings from other groups and is eager to expand the variety of programming it offers. To enquire, email ballinasloetownhalltheatre@gmail.com.

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Town Band Work With Orchestra and Choirs

By Maria Connolly



Members Enjoying their participation in the Annual St Patricks Day Parade

The band collaborated with the Music Matters Orchestra (Junior and Senior) and held a wonderful free concert in the Gaelscoil on Sunday 1st March. Highlights on the programme were "The European Anthem/Ode to Joy" (Beethoven), "Swan Lake" (Tchaikovsky), the "Pink Panther Theme" (Mancini), and the rousing "Radetzky March" (Strauss).

The band was very active on Tuesday 17th March as they played at the Ballinasloe Care Centre (formerly Mill Race Nursing Home). They then participated in the annual St Patrick's Day Parade, which has always been a privilege and honour for the band, adding both pomp and ceremony to proceedings.

The Town Band will host a Table Quiz at 8pm on Friday night, April 3rd (Good Friday) in Gullane's Hotel; €40 per team of four. What better way to enjoy a good night out while testing your memory on general knowledge and helping the band with its fundraising efforts to offset the costs of running the band hall and equipping the band with instruments and uniforms?

The band will join St Brigid's Choir at a concert in Kiltoom, Co.

Roscommon, on Saturday 18th April. This is a continuation of the collaboration with the choir after they guested at the Town Band's Christmas Concert in the Town Hall Theatre.

The band are currently rehearsing "Hymn to Freedom" by Oscar Peterson, and will be joined by the choir as a special feature of the evening's performances.

Ballinasloe Active Retirement Choir (leader Marie Power) will host their 20th Anniversary Concert in the newly refurbished Town Hall Theatre on Sunday 17th May, with the Town Band guesting as well as the Grey Lake Quartet.

A special segment of the concert will be the operatic salute to La Prima Donna Margaret Burke Sheridan, featuring the fabulous voice of Rachel Goode. Proceeds from the event will be for Ballinasloe Town Band.

Tickets may be purchased at the door or online at www.ballinasloetownhall.com.

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Joyce Exhibiting in Irish Workhouse Centre

By Maria Connolly

Joyce Little, visual artist and art therapist, will exhibit a collection of textile artworks at the Irish Workhouse Centre, Portumna, this May. The exhibition, entitled "Threadbare", will be available to view from Sunday, 24 May to Sunday, 28 June. The official launch will be held on Sunday, 24 May at 3.00 pm and Joyce warmly invites anyone interested to attend.

Joyce's work explores identity—in her early career she was a fashion designer with a thriving business who showcased her creations both on national television and internationally. In 1998, she went back to education to study Fine Art and Printmaking at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (now Atlantic Technological University).

Joyce states: "During this time I cast away my textile background and focused on trying new mediums and acquiring new skills. However, textiles are a love of mine and in early work, almost unconsciously, I was drawn back to them, whether it was stitching into canvas paintings or adding threads to printed artworks." Joyce has since gone on to complete her MA in Visual Art at the Institute of Art, Design and Technology and an MA in Art Therapy at the Crawford College of Art and Design.

Today, her work pushes the boundaries of the audience's perceptions of textile art. Her work explores the expressive potential of textiles; materials that have long been woven into the rhythms of domestic life, and yet they carry a profound sculptural and cultural weight.

"Textiles play a huge role in our lives from birth to death. They are how we express ourselves and our identities are so intertwined with fabrics... we display what we value," Joyce adds.



Joyce Little, Visual Artist and Art Therapist.

Joyce uses fabric not just as a surface to be adorned but as a structural medium capable of form, tension and movement. Her work also shines a light on the effects of consumerism, fast fashion, cheap labour and the huge amount of textile waste produced. Joyce tells us: "I volunteered in the Red Cross Children's Hospital in South Africa in 2017. It was a life-changing experience. Seeing the poverty in the townships and the volume of waste in more affluent areas was horrendous. It made me more determined to introduce sustainable arts practices, to reuse and recycle."

Joyce uses recycled fabrics and found objects in the creation of this body of work, including old linen, lace, cotton sheets, tablecloths and vintage fabrics. Each piece has undergone laborious stages, including washing, hand-dyeing, printing, shaping, stitching, and pleating to manipulate the cloth to create sculptural works. The work is heavily process-based, using methods such as slow-stitching, free motion, slashing and Shibori. She often reveals the construction process. There is a beauty to the labour, with each piece often taking weeks or months to complete.

Joyce will also be hosting a Gelli printing workshop for adults on Monday, 25 May, 2-4 pm in Portumna, at the Irish Workhouse Centre. This workshop invites adults to engage in a creative exploration of Gelli printing using a combination of botanical materials, textiles, and intricate lace patterns. This session supports both beginners and experienced artists in developing layered monoprints suitable for framing, journaling, collage, or textile applications. It is funded by Creative Ireland, Galway County. To find out more, please contact: info@irishworkhousecentre.ie

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IFTA Win for Éimear Noone and Craig Garfinkle

By Colm Croffy



Eimear's mother, Mary Noone, deputising at the IFTA ceremony



Craig Stuart Garfinkle, with the IFTA award

Local woman Éimear Noone and her husband, Craig Stuart Garfinkle, are celebrating after winning the award for Best Original Music at the 2026 Irish Film and Television Academy Awards, also known as the IFTAs.

Kilconnell-based Éimear is a conductor and composer best known for her work on the online game World of Warcraft. She has also scored music for the series Maxine, and feature films such as *The Canterville Ghost* and *So This Is Christmas*. She regularly conducts orchestras worldwide and made history by becoming the first female conductor to perform at the 92nd Academy Awards in 2020. As an advocate for creative women in technology and music, Éimear is also in demand as a speaker and radio host.

Craig is an Emmy-nominated composer who has worked on over 140 film trailers, including: *J.J. Abrams' Star Trek*, the *Harry Potter* franchise, *James Bond*, *Sin City* and *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. Craig's music has also appeared in hundreds of film and television

projects such as NBC's *The Office*, *Fringe*, *Lost*, *The Sopranos*, *X Factor* and *America's Got Talent*. Éimear and Craig frequently collaborate, as they did for their work on the Irish-language drama *Báite*.

Directed by Ruán Magan, the film is set in the mid-seventies and focuses on publican Peggy Casey, who is trying to keep her late father's pub going in a remote area of the Gaeltacht. She's expecting a busy weekend with plenty of tourists and fishermen, but when a body is discovered in the receding waters of a nearby lake, a Dublin detective uncovers disturbing secrets in the townland's history related to the Casey family. It is the latest Cine4 film from TG4 and follows in the footsteps of other Irish dramas produced by the company, including *Róise & Frank* and *An Cailín Ciúin*.

At the ceremony, Craig said: "When I married Eimear Noone 18 years ago, I didn't realise I was marrying an entire country... now I've got another additional Irish family, the entire *Báite* crew, and now I have my extended Irish creative community... thank you for embracing this kid from Chicago, and now East Galway."

Éimear wasn't at the awards, but she later said thank you to producer Siobhán Ní Gadhra and director Ruán Magan, "who made this an experience steeped in deep creativity and collegial respect with an enormous amount of heart". She also thanked the entire crew ("a class act"), as well as their management agency, PolyArts, the team at their production company, Twelve O'Clock Arts, their assistants Emma Flynn and Zoebelle Cosgrave, and the Irish film and television community.

As for what comes next, Éimear and Craig are always looking to experiment. Craig says: "We are always looking for new and exciting music to perform." In 2025, Éimear also created a new kind of concert, *Gamesymphonic*. "In these shows, we explain how video game music works — like how it changes when you do different things in the game. We show this live on stage."

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Library 10th Anniversary In Convent Location

By Maria Connolly

The library has exciting exhibitions planned for both April and May. This April, they will host *Leathacra (Half Acre)*, a solo exhibition by visual artist Yvonne Devine.

The collection represents a meticulous 360-degree exploration of Yvonne's own homestead near Caltra, offering a deep mapping of the local landscape through a sophisticated fusion of fine art and textured abstraction. Yvonne's background is uniquely multifaceted, blending professional qualifications in Art (Sculpture) and Interior Design.

At the heart of this exhibition is a powerful message of climate awareness and nature-based learning. Many of the featured works are painted on recycled canvases. By repurposing these materials, discarded objects are transformed into vibrant windows that look out onto the rugged beauty of the Irish countryside, its built heritage and elements of traditional Irish culture.

The exhibition launches on Saturday, April 11 at 2.30pm with the opportunity to meet the artist. Yvonne will be accompanied by pianist Conor Hannelly, a classically trained musician who will perform on the day. The exhibition runs from 1-30 April.

From 7-28 May, The Gathering Art Group will show their work, with the exhibition launch taking place on Saturday, May 9 at 2.30pm. The group consists of local artists under the tutelage of visual artist and Group 8 member Joyce Little. The Gathering Art Group meets every Thursday morning in an open studio setting. They are a gathering of artists and creatives who share the belief that the process of making art is as meaningful as the finished piece. The group supports one another through sharing ideas, stories, and laughter.

Group members include: Paul Boyle (portrait artist), Grellan Ganly (painter and ceramic artist), Geraldine Jordan (mixed



Dr. Orla Nic Suibhne, SEAI SEC mentor for County Galway, who will speak at the library on Thursday 16 April



Visual Artist, Yvonne Devine, who will exhibit work at the library this April

media artist), Barry Naughton (writer and mixed media artist), Mary Connolly (mixed media and textile artist), Dymrna Flynn (mixed media and textile artist) and Damien O'Grady (print and mixed media artist).

The library will also host two talks in the coming months. On Thursday, April 16 at 11.30am, they welcome Dr. Orla Nic Suibhne, SEAI SEC mentor for County Galway, who will be giving advice and helpful tips about SEAI Grants. Following this, Bríd Mercer will deliver a talk on Woodlawn Estate on Saturday, April 25 at 2.30pm. Bríd will cover the history of the estate from its creation to the War of Independence. She is a former electrical and information technology engineer who currently lives in Lancashire with her family, but who grew up in Woodlawn.

Finally, the library team welcome all on Saturday, May 16 to mark the 10-year anniversary of the move to the site of the former Convent of Mercy on Society Street. Join them as they mark the occasion with a family fun morning with plenty of surprises. Keep an eye out on their social media pages for details or sign up to their newsletter: ballinasloe@galwaylibrary.ie

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Jane Quinn Named Grand Marshal in Auckland

By Colm Croffy

Jane Quinn, daughter of Jimmy and the late Irene Conway, was selected as Grand Marshal of this year's New Zealand St Patrick's Day Parade in Auckland.

Jane was born in Dublin but she spent her summers in Ballinasloe before her mother and father moved to the town in 1991. Her parents ran several local pubs and her father, better known as Jimmy "The Hat", still lives in the area (her mother died in 2010). Jane says that when she flies back to Ireland, "it's to visit Ballinasloe". Her fondest memories of the town are: "cycling into town, hail, rain or snow, to attend discos and meet our friends".

Jane moved to New Zealand in 1988 and has been settled there since. When she arrived, she became friends with an Irish woman who introduced her to Harps GAA Club in Auckland. Jane started playing for them and describes both playing sport and watching it as a big feature of her life during the early years in a new country. "It was a great way for me to get to know new people," she says. Her son later played for the same club.

She has a long history of volunteering for community organisations that support the Irish community in Auckland. Having been a GAA player, she subsequently became President and Secretary of Harps GAA and helped to organise the Australasian Games when it was held in Auckland. She is also a former president of the Auckland Irish Society, a former trustee of the city's St Patrick's Day

Jane Quinn, who was chosen as Grand Marshal of the New Zealand St Patrick's Day parade

Festival, and a board member of the Irish Business Network New Zealand. She says that she became involved simply as people asked her to help out: "they were easy 'yes' answers. I remembered what it was like arriving... [as] a young person not knowing anyone and I wanted to be able to give back to the Irish community that made New Zealand my home."

Jane describes being President of the Auckland Irish Society, in particular, as "a highlight in my life". She adds that "although I volunteered for various different Irish organisations over the last 25 years, my only motivation has been to help Irish people settle easily into a new life... Leaving your home is not an easy decision; if we can make the transition easier for people, it has to be a good thing."

Her commitment to the community continues and she trained to become a Justice of the Peace: "so that I could give back to the community and thank them for allowing me to have such a wonderful life here." In recent years, she also co-founded Mná na hÉireann, an organisation that promotes women in sport, culture, literature and the arts.

Jane feels that Auckland is fortunate to have so many Irish networks. "Keeping our heritage alive within the diaspora and passing our culture onto the next generation is a privilege for me." She is keen to stress the contribution of others, too, adding: "Every volunteering role I did had a great team so it's not like I've done this all on my own." She sees her appointment as Grand Marshal as "less like a personal milestone and more like a celebration of a collective effort" by the Irish community.

Jane met her husband, Gerry, in New Zealand and has two children. When her children reached school age, she attended Auckland University, where she studied business and marketing. She subsequently worked in barristers' practice management, and senior finance and compliance roles, before starting her own organisation, JQ Professional Services. It provides services to corporate, private and barristers' chambers, as well as a range of other clientele.



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Jane Quinn with her family. (L-R): Gerry Quinn, daughter-in-law Anne Forster, son Sean Forster, son-in-law Sam Higgins and daughter Rhiannon Higgins with granddaughter Belle Jane Higgins.



Jane Quinn photo 1: Pictured are Jane Quinn (second from left) with (L-R): her husband Gerry Quinn, sister Lisa Conway, her father, James Conway, and Lisa's husband, Darren Gleeson.

She is currently National Coordinator for The Tara Trust, a charitable organisation that originated during the Covid pandemic to support the sizeable Irish community. Those on work visas weren't entitled to any government assistance and, with funding from the Irish government, The Tara Trust began to support people in need. The organisation continues to support Irish people to this day with "emotional support, financial support, or sometimes just someone to talk to." Jane also supports organisations across New Zealand and promotes Irish artists visiting the country. The Irish connection is extensive, with around one in six New Zealanders having some Irish ancestry.

The Tara Trust also holds an annual fundraiser each year around St Patrick's Day. The minister visiting New Zealand for St Patrick's Day usually attends the fundraising luncheon and this year the visiting minister was Galway West TD Noel Grealish. The trust appreciates the honour, and Jane says that "it is always wonderful for the ministers to see the work that is being done by the Irish communities."



Jane with her parents, James and Irene Conway.

Outside of her busy work life and voluntary commitments, Jane enjoys quilting, spending time with her family and reading Irish authors. She became a grandmother in 2024 and says that "it is the most exciting thing to happen to me in a long time."

Jane believes that the relationship between Ireland and New Zealand is "uniquely special due to our similarities. For example, the Irish and the Māori people both have a deep connection to their culture, language, music, sport and traditions. We both have an ability to laugh at ourselves, we enjoy family get-togethers, and many of the traditions around wakes and tangis (the Māori farewell to the deceased) are quite similar. The agriculture aspect here is very like Ireland, with rolling green hills and a strong farming tradition."

The Auckland St Patrick's Day Festival citation on the nomination reads: "Jane has made outstanding contributions to New Zealand through decades of leadership in the Irish community, a distinguished career in business and professional services, and dedicated public service as a Justice of the Peace."

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Local Comedian Launches New Comedy Night

By Maria Connolly

Comedian, podcaster, Joe Dolan impersonator, cabaret performer, funeral and wedding celebrant, writer, musician, and part-time farmer Breda Larkin has recently returned to the area from Dublin. She's enjoying rural living again and is also launching a new monthly comedy show at Brewery Lane.

"I've always wanted to move home, and I was one foot in, one foot out for many years in Dublin. When I was home, eventually I didn't want to go back to Dublin," Breda explains.

After spending summer 2025 appearing on the festival circuit, including slots at Electric Picnic and All Together Now, and with a regular Wild Geeze cabaret show with long-time collaborator Laura LaVelle, Breda realised she didn't need to be based in Dublin anymore. She now feels established enough to work from the countryside where she can combine all of her diverse interests.

"It was always on the cards that I would come back. And now I feel I'm at a time in my life where I feel more settled. I couldn't be happier," she says, adding that she loves having her own space while also being close to her parents, Seán and Mary, nurturing her relationship with them as they get older. Now 43, she also enjoys the "space to think" in the countryside and believes it will bear fruit in terms of writing material in the future.

Her appearance on the RTÉ show Love in the Country last year led to other opportunities, including a role on the RTÉ soap Fair City.



Breda Larkin, who is launching a new monthly comedy night in Brewery Lane in May.



Comedian John Colleary, who will appear on Friday May 22 at Breda Larkin's new comedy night in Brewery Lane.

She has stayed busy since and will have a slot on an upcoming national chat show. She is also recording her ongoing comedy podcast, Wild Geeze, with Laura LaVelle; and she wants to write a musical play about the beef industry.

Breda also has big plans for her small farm. She's investing in Galway sheep, a rare breed, and is hoping to plant more trees after she and her dad joined the Native Woodland Scheme. Over the longer term, her vision for the farm is one of "trees, bees and therapies." The latter part of that sentence is the idea that one part of a farm could be developed as a health and wellbeing retreat where people can come and unwind.

Breda believes it's important to have varied interests. "Diversity is key in everything. Having a few strings to your bow. As an artist, you have to do that anyway; you have to be good at music, singing, etc."

Her new comedy show in Ballinasloe will launch on Friday, May 22nd, with John Colleary as its first headliner. Described as "my favourite comic... playful, inventive and brilliant" by Tommy Tiernan, John has performed successful solo shows nationwide, including Loud And Colleary, Head Like A Shed, and Wildlife. He has also starred in IFTA-nominated shows The Savage Eye and Irish Pictorial Weekly. Doors will open for Brewery Lane at 7.30pm, with the show starting at 8pm. Tickets will be available at the door and will cost €18.

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Karate Celebrates "Women in Sport"

By Maria Connolly



Participants at the session held to mark "Women in Sport" week. **BACK ROW (L-R):** Sabrina Roncali Murphy, Erika Aleksanderpuciute, Ugne Lukosuinaite, Victoria Petrosyan, Jade Goldbey, Aoife O'Grady, Siofra Naughton, Laura Costello, Niamh Costello, Saoirse Earls and Sensei Claire Harte. **FRONT ROW (L-R):** Poppy Mulvany, Isabel Valiyapardmpil, Denise McEville, Sylvia Roncali, Rianna Poceja and Alison Dolan.

To celebrate "Women in Sport Week", Itosu-Kai Karatedo Ireland (IKKI) held a special session for women and girls. The session was convened by Sensei Claire Harte, 6th Dan Karatedo. Everybody went through a warm-up, learned a new kata, and practised self-defence. Treats were laid on and a great time was had by all.

IKKI Ballinasloe also took part in a junior tournament in Dublin recently. There were seven separate disciplines that students could compete in: individual kata and kumite, team kata and kumite, parent and child kata, jureken and Kobudo. The boys entered numerous disciplines and performed exceptionally well, taking gold in most events.

It was a great start to 2026 for the IKKI association, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. It began in 1976 where the club trained in the Social Centre Gym in Society Street.

The IKKI currently trains in the Emerald Ballroom, McNevin

Avenue, Ballinasloe on Monday and Wednesday nights from 7-8 pm. Call in for a chat either night or watch the training in action. Beginners must be 6 years old or older, but there is no upper age limit. For more information visit www.ikki.ie or contact Leo Mulvany, 7th Dan Karatedo, IKKI Chief Instructor, using the contact form on the website.



Competitors at the recent junior tournament in Dublin. **L-R:** Conor Dolan, Odhrán Fitzgerald, Harry Kinnucane, Conor Coughlan, Kyle Burke and Oisín Fitzgerald.

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ISUZU





Underage Players Show Their Skills

By Maria Connolly



Padraig Fahy from Beechlawn Organic Farm presenting jerseys to the Ladies' Junior Team Captain Shauna Mitchell and Vice Captain Orla Madden. Padraig's son Thomás is also there.



The U11 hurling team who recently played at half-time in the match between Galway and Kilkenny

Two of the underage teams from Ballinasloe GAA recently got to play in front of a big crowd. The U11 hurlers not only got to see Galway comprehensively beat Kilkenny in Pearse Stadium, but they also played at half-time under the lights. To top it off, they met the players and got loads of autographs. It was a brilliant start to the year for these young stars. Thanks to Galway GAA and Galway GAA coaching for the invitation. The girls' U12 team also welcomed the Galway Ladies Football Team to the pitch for their game against Armagh, before they played at half-time in front of the crowd.

Training for all codes has now resumed, with a special mention to the girls' U14 football training, who have had a great turnout so far this season. They take part in boxercise on Fridays at 7 pm in the Emerald Ballroom, and then train on the astroturf on Tuesdays at 6 pm. New and returning players are welcome to come along at any time.

For those who want a fun and social outlet for exercise and to make new friends, Gaelic for Mothers and Others has resumed and will be held every Wednesday at St Theresa's pitch at 8.30 pm. New members of all skill levels are welcome and no experience is needed.

A club social night was held recently in Gullane's Hotel, when medals were presented to the junior hurlers for winning the Premier Junior Championship for the third year running. Jack Mitchell won the Hurler's Player of the Year award, with the Players' Player of the Year being presented to Cathal O'Hanlon.

The Ladies' Player of the Year was presented to Isabelle Ward, with the Players' Player of the Year going to Clodagh Killeen. The Footballer's Player of the Year was James Shaughnessy, and the Players' Player of the Year was presented to Graeme Gullane. Club Secretary Gerry Seale was also presented with an award in recognition of his many years of service to the club.

The club committee are very appreciative of the Fahy family and all at Beechlawn Organic Farm, who sponsored a set of jerseys for the Ladies Junior Team.

Finally, bingo continues every Tuesday night at 8 pm in the Emerald Ballroom. Congratulations go to Eithne Larkin and Joby Madden, who both won €500 recently.

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The U12 girls' football team who played at half-time in the match between Galway and Armagh

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Rugby Club Hosts Golf Classic Fundraiser

By Maria Connolly



U16 Girls Team Who won the league title in February

Ballinasloe RFC, celebrating its 150th year, is now coming to the business end of the season. It's been such a busy year with each weekend seeing lots of activity. The weekend always starts with the Minis on Saturday mornings, where the stars of the future hone their skills, followed by underage games and then the seniors. The Men's Senior team returned to the Junior 1A League this year and finished a creditable third. The experience of playing at the highest level again can only see them grow in the coming seasons. Competition within the squad is high as the seconds finished second in their league, which will benefit them going forwards.

At underage level, the club continues to be strong, with all teams competing to a high standard and playing well in all competitions. Many also reached the semi-finals or finals of their cup competitions. Girls' rugby also continues to grow in the club, with both the 16's and 18's teams winning their leagues and the U16 team playing in the Cup final in Dexcom stadium on March 22nd

The club has forged great relationships with Clonfert College (following their relationship with Garbally), and many of the club's coaches help with the development of the school. This has seen the school's senior ladies win the A League. The coaches have also been working tirelessly with the boys' junior and senior teams. This partnership will only be of great benefit to both club and school in the coming years.

The 150th anniversary book is still on sale in Salmons. It's a great read and will adorn a coffee table for years to come.

The club's annual Golf Classic will take place at Ballinasloe Golf Club on Friday, 29 May, and Saturday, 30 May. This is one of the club's biggest fundraisers and is always a great weekend. It's for teams of four, and time sheets are now available at the golf club.

The season will end on Sunday, 3 May, with the club's presentation and fun day, when all players and parents will gather to celebrate and remember another great season at the club. It will then be time to give the pitches a good rest as the grounds committee get them ready for the 26/27 season, which kicks off in early September.



The victorious Ladies' U18 team, who won their league.

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Town AFC 75th Anniversary Challenge

By Maria Connolly



Ballinasloe Town AFC's Senior Men's Team

As part of the celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the soccer club, they are organising a "75 Miles for 75 Years Challenge", to run from 1–31 May.

This will be the first of several events to take place to celebrate the anniversary and is a marvellous opportunity for everyone in the community to get involved, get out and get active. The challenge is to walk, jog or run 75 miles over the month at a time and place of your own choosing. It works out at roughly 2.4 miles or 3.9 km per day.



The under 12A Premier squad.

Funds will go to benefit the club, and two organisations who do great work locally, Ballinasloe Social Services and the Brothers of Charity. Money raised for the club will help towards costs for the ongoing development works at the club grounds. All participants will be asked to take a sponsorship card and seek donations over the month of May. There will also be an online donation option for those overseas who wish to participate and donate. Participants will receive a personalised Ballinasloe Town AFC 75 Miles for 75 Years medal and a certificate of achievement, and they will also be invited to a social event at the end of the challenge. For more details on this fantastic community event, contact Bjorn Manning, Chairperson, on (087) 652 2914, or Public Relations Officer Johnny Walsh on (087) 997 3008.

At the time of going to press, the senior men's team needed just a win in their last league game to qualify for a play-off for promotion to the Roscommon Premier Division. Meanwhile, the senior ladies team had reached the semi-final of the cup in the Galway League. This has also been an excellent season to date for the club's under-21 team, who had made it through to

the semi-final of the cup. The underage teams have also been enjoying league success. At the time of going to press, the under-18s were top of Division Two and had qualified for the semi-final of the Division One Cup. Meanwhile, the under-13 squad was facing a play-off for the league title, having already qualified for promotion, with the under-14A squad in second place in their division. The under-12B squad had made it through to the semi-final of their cup, while the under-12 Premier squad had reached the quarter-final of their Premier competition. This squad will also play in the Bob Paisley Cup on 9 April against Halewood from Liverpool, in the 30th anniversary of this exchange tournament. This year, the match will take place at the club's ground, Shearwater Hotel Park. Finally, as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations, the club expect to launch a history of their 75 years later this summer. A lot of work is completed on the history, and it is something that everyone associated with the club is eagerly looking forward to!

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Pádraig Pearse's Updates

By Maria Connolly



Charlotte Blackweir, who represents Pádraig Pearse's on the Roscommon Camogie panel

Roscommon teams are doing well in the National Leagues, and Pádraig Pearse's congratulates their players who represent the club on these panels.

There are eight club representatives on the Roscommon hurling panel: Sean Canning, Darragh Finn, Keelan Ryan, Ronan Finn, Daniel Staunton, Jamie Donoghue, Liam Creavin and Karl Feehily. At the time of going to press, the team needed only a draw in their final game at home to Donegal to secure promotion and a place in the Division 3 League Final.

Roscommon footballers have had an exciting and successful return to the top flight of the National League, and now have six club representatives on the county senior football panel. They are: Caelim Keogh, Conor Ryan, Eoin Colleran, Declan Kenny, Ronan Daly and Paul Carey.

The Roscommon U20 footballers will commence their Championship campaign in the coming weeks, and are again represented by Keelan Kelly on that squad this year. At Minor U17 level, Enda Browne, Jack Brooks and Dylan Goode represent the club, and all at Pearse's wish the lads the very best of luck in the coming months for the Connacht Championship campaigns.

Club member Charlotte Blackweir was congratulated with the Roscommon camogie team, who have secured their status in Division 3 for next year, while the county ladies' footballers were also in with a chance of making their divisional final. Grainne Lohan, Laura Glennon and Lily Finneran all represent Pearse's on the panel.

There was a large Pádraig Pearse's contingent on the Clonfert College team who won the Connacht Senior C Hurling

Championship, and who were narrowly beaten in the All-Ireland semi-final. Pearse's players on the Clonfert College panel were: Donnacha Monaghan, Niall Doran, Keelan Kelly, Keelan Doran, Jason Carty, Dan Mooney, Kieran Cunningham, Ross Glynn, Joey O'Beirne, Sean Maguire, Joe Johnston, Rory Finn, Sam O'Brien, Aaron O'Connell and Evan Sweeney.

Pearse's also recently picked up the club's ninth Minor hurling title, and a first since 2018. In the final, they beat Four Roads by nine on a 2-19 to 1-13 scoreline. Captain Daniel Mooney was awarded Man of the Match after a fantastic performance. Well done to all involved with this team for sticking with it during a marathon season.

The club hosted a Hurling and Camogie Presentation Night in the clubhouse recently to celebrate a great year of success on the pitch in 2025. The event honoured the dedication shown by players and included the presentation of medals to the club's successful underage hurling and camogie teams. These young players are the future of the club, and it was great to celebrate their achievements. The senior hurling panel were also presented with their medals following their league win.

Club leagues have restarted, with men's football and hurling results, fixtures and tables now available on the club website: www.padraigpearse.roscommon.gaa.ie. Details of ladies' football and camogie fixtures are included in the weekly club newsletter. To sign up, just email: **communications.padraigpearse.roscommon@gaa.ie**.



The Minor Hurling team, who recently won a ninth County Title for the club



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Golf Season in Full Swing

By Maria Connolly



The winning lady's team from the St Brigid's Day Spring Scramble. L-R: Mary Shier, Claire Maloney, Vice-Captain John Kelly, President Gerry Barrett, Noreen Kelly and Anne-Marie Connolly



Club member, Charlie Mooney, who recently had his first win on the college circuit in the US.

Easter Monday Scramble through the sponsorship of a tee or team, please contact Teresa at teresa@ballinasloesocialservices.ie or (090) 964 3217).

In May, the Connolly Classic will be held from May 14 – 17. This is an open competition for a team of four. The members' fee is €25 per person with re-entry €15. For visitors, the fee is €40 per person, with re-entry of €20. To enter, please contact the golf club on the number given above.

The golf season is now busy with regular events planned for April and May. The St Brigid's Day Swing Scramble was a fantastic and well supported event with 44 teams playing over three days. The overall winners were Mark Kelly, John Treacy, Declan Malone and Aaron Tracey. The mixed team winners were Cathal Rodgers, Vincent Costello, Louise Killeen and Jim Killeen, while the winning men's team consisted of Hugh Killeen, Ksawery Wieszorek, Tom Cafferty and Joe Tierney. The winning women's team were Noreen Kelly, Mary Shier, Anne-Marie Connolly and Clare Maloney.

Upcoming events include the Good Friday Bonus Ball on Friday, April 3, which is open to all. The entrance fee is €10 for members and €20 for non-members. Then on Easter Monday, the club hosts the Social Services Scramble. This event raises much-needed funds for the town's Social Services, and is for teams of three at €60 per team.

Anyone wishing to enter either competition can do so by contacting the golf club on (090) 964 2126. (If any person or business would like to support the

The golf club would also like to extend their congratulations to two of the club's young players for their success. Charlie Mooney has lately won his first college win in the US, winning in a playoff with a birdie. Charlie is in his third year in America and has a scholarship to Oral Roberts University College, Tulsa State, Oklahoma. Finally, Niall Conneely represented Ireland for his second Irish cap against Germany in the U18 boys' competition in Seapoint, Co Louth recently.



2026 Lady Captain, Breda Conneely



2026 Captain, Stephen Ruane



2026 President, Gerry Baret



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Connacht Tennis Champions 2026

By Maria Connolly

It's been a busy and exciting couple of months on the courts at Ballinasloe Tennis Club. The highlight so far has been the Men's Division 5 team winning the Connacht Spring League title.

After a convincing semi-final win over Claremorris, the team delivered another strong performance in the final against Ballina, securing a fantastic 3-1 victory. Congratulations to Enda Staunton, Igor Coretchi, Martin Sibanda, Michael Bleahene, Robbie Riddell and Vincent Hall on a brilliant achievement.

This marks the club's first-ever Grade 5 Connacht title, and the team will now go on to represent Connacht against the Munster champions later this year. Best of luck to the lads.

The Ladies Division 6 team also had a very strong campaign, narrowly missing out on a place in the final after some excellent performances throughout the competition.

Club activity is in full swing with both Ladies' and Men's internal Spring Leagues underway, along with the regular Mixed Doubles Social Tennis Night every Wednesday evening.



Cover Photo: The team who won the 2026 Connacht Spring League in Division 5. (L-R): Robert Riddell, Igor Coretchi, Enda Staunton, Michael Bleahene, Martin Sibanda, Vincent Hall.



Some Womens Tennis Players of Spring Evening Fun Tournament

Meanwhile, the "Get Back into Tennis" programme for beginners and improvers continues to go from strength to strength, with new players joining regularly. The sessions are open to both members and non-members, and all equipment is provided, so it's the perfect chance to give tennis a try, especially with the brighter evenings ahead.

Free coaching for non-members takes place on Sundays: 5pm - 6pm and 6pm - 7pm. Junior coaching continues every Friday from 3.30pm to 6.30pm. The club is also looking forward to its Junior Open Day on Saturday April 18, with plenty of fun games and activities for young players of all levels. Further ahead, the popular summer tennis camp will run from July 6-10, with sessions for 6-10 years and 11-17 years. For all adult and junior coaching enquiries, contact Club Coach Lisa on (086) 221 5843.

With the long summer evenings approaching, now is a great time to pick up a racket and try tennis. Ballinasloe Tennis Club offers a fun, friendly and social atmosphere, with three modern all-weather courts available to members. For more information about the club, visit www.ballinasloetennis.net or check them out on social media.

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Swimming Club Host Regional Gala

By Maria Connolly

It's been another busy few months for the swimmers of Ballinasloe Swimming Club. The junior swimmers competed recently in the Aquasprint League competition. Well done to Team Captains, Lorcan and Isabella, and to all the junior swimmers, who put in great performances.



Isabella and Lorcan, Junior Team Captains

Meanwhile, lots of personal bests were achieved in the Aspiring 50m Long Course Competition at the University of Limerick Sports Arena. Congratulations to Abigail, Caoimhe M, Jack, Maeve, and Caoimhe L.

The club also recently hosted its home gala, competing against five other clubs. They were: Athlone Swimming Club, Trident Swimming Club, Longford Swimming Club, Coman's Swimming Club, and Carrick Fins Swimming Club.



Members of Ballinasloe Swimming Club at their recent home meet, a Regional Gala.



Junior swimmers at the recent Aquaswim meet.

It was a great evening of racing, with personal bests and bands received, and lots of swimmers making their debuts in competition. Thanks go to all the clubs that attended, parents, coaches, team managers, committee members, timekeepers, Connacht officials, and to Coral Leisure Ballinasloe and staff for all their work getting the pool ready. A special thanks goes to local bakers who held a bake sale on the night.

The club's Swimmer of the Month for January was Laura Costello from the A squad, while Jamie Drayne from the B Squad was chosen as Swimmer of the Month for February. Congratulations and keep up the great work!

The next few months will be busy, with the Community Games, Aspiring Meets, the Connacht Open, and Aquasprint leagues all coming up. Club swimmers will also be swimming 5,000m in the month of April to raise much-needed funds for Barnardos. Please share and donate if you can. You can find the link to donate on the club's Facebook page: [@ballinasloeswimmingclub](#). You can also find the club on Instagram.

A special thanks as always goes to Coral Leisure Ballinasloe, sponsors Cahalans Jewellers, and all our parents and fabulous coaches from the club.

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Camogie Club For Croke Park

By Maria Connolly



The U11 team getting ready for a match.

Ballinasloe Camogie Club is gearing up for an exciting 2026 season, with training now back in full swing across all age groups. Competitive action also began recently.

The club is delighted to announce that the U12 team has been selected to participate in the Camán to Croker event on July 18. This is a fantastic opportunity for young players to experience the thrill of playing in Croke Park and to compete against teams from across the country.

In the lead-up to the event, the club will be organising a number of fundraising initiatives and will greatly appreciate the continued support of the local community.

New members are always welcome, and the club encourages players of all ages and skill levels to join its vibrant and energetic community. Training times are as follows:

- ▶ U7 and U10: Tuesdays at 6pm
- ▶ U12 and U14: Wednesdays at 6pm and Sundays at 11am
- ▶ Juniors: Wednesdays at 7pm

All training sessions take place at the Coláiste Chluain Fearta, Mackney Campus pitches (Eircode H53 CP40). For further information, please contact Michelle on **085 704 7434**.



Ballinasloe Camogie Club U10 team

Athletics Club For Connacht Indoors

Ballinasloe and District Athletics Club continues to go from strength to strength as it heads into a busy competition season. Training is in full swing every Tuesday and Thursday evening, with athletes of all ages working hard as they prepare for the upcoming Connacht Indoor Championships in Athlone this April.

Following the end of the indoor season, the athletes will turn their attention to the Galway Outdoor Championships in May, which is always an important date in the club calendar.

The club has seen fantastic growth in recent months and is delighted to

have over 70 members now. It's especially encouraging to see so many young athletes taking part in competitions and representing the club with great enthusiasm and determination. The committee is extremely proud of all the athletes and the commitment they continue to show in training and competition.





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Clonfert College Sporting Successes

By Maria Connolly



Second-year student Dylan Corcoran, who recently won an All-Ireland boxing competition.



The Senior Girls' Rugby team, who won the Senior A Girls' School League Final.



Ava Whyte

The school's Senior Hurling team won the Connacht Championship and reached the semi-finals of the Masita All-Ireland PPS Senior C Championship, bowing out on penalties to St Joseph's College of Borrisoleigh in a tightly fought contest. The management team were masterful in the way they prepared the squad; the players have benefited hugely from their guidance and support.

In the first year of the school's existence, Clonfert College is celebrating multiple sporting successes.

Most recently, Dylan Corcoran won the All-Ireland Schoolboys B4 National Final in Dublin. Dylan is a second-year student who also plays on the club's football team. He had already achieved considerable regional success, with two county titles and three Connacht titles to his name, and came through his quarter-final and semi-final matches in impressive fashion. He competes with Titan's Boxing Club in Westside, Galway, and is coached by Martin Barrett. His win is an outstanding achievement and a testament to his hard work, dedication and commitment to sport.

In team sports, the Senior Girls' rugby team won the Senior A Girls' Schools League Final, beating Sacred Heart Westport on a 31-19 scoreline. The school is immensely proud of this group of students, who represent the school with determination, teamwork and pride. Their resilience and spirit have been outstanding all season. Their coaches, who have shown their commitment throughout the year, were congratulated by all.

In other individual sports success, Ava Whyte represented Clonfert College in the All-Ireland 3.5 km Cross Country Championships. The school is proud of Ava for reaching All-Ireland level, encouraging others with her determination, resilience and work ethic.

Principal, Board, Staff and Campus congratulate all the students involved, and also the relevant management teams and coaches. The time, dedication and effort involved in preparing to compete at regional and national levels is significant, and their leadership, organisation and encouragement have been central to the students' success. The future for sport in Clonfert College – at individual or team level – looks incredibly bright.



The Senior Boys' Hurling team, who won the Senior C Connacht Championship.

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Monopoly Run: Moore Scouts in London

By Maria Connolly

Moore Scouts and Ventures had an unforgettable weekend in London as they joined 9,000 Scouts from across the UK and Ireland for the 20th anniversary of the Monopoly Run "Live" in London. The aim of a Monopoly Run is for small teams to visit as many locations as possible, including bonus Community Chest tasks. The local Scouts explored the streets of London and stopped by iconic landmarks like Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace, and Big Ben.



Members of Moore Scouts with a Darth Vader statue during their recent trip to London.

The Scouts flew from Dublin to London Gatwick, proudly wearing the international neckerchiefs presented to them by Scouting Ireland. The 21st Purley Scout Group, located on the grounds of St Barnabas Church, generously welcomed them as guests in Purley, Croydon. Richard and his Explorer Scouts extended a very warm welcome to the members of Moore Scouts. As the youth members swapped neckerchiefs and shared stories, new bonds of friendship quickly developed between the groups; after a feast of fresh pizza, they set up camp and settled in for the night.

The Monopoly adventure commenced on Saturday morning in Hyde Park, with three teams ready to do Moore Scouts proud in their first-ever participation in the London Monopoly Run. Supported by the Monopoly Run Live app, they took off around the streets of London in pursuit of buying and renting property and earning cash rewards. They completed the various challenges set throughout the day and answered the twenty cryptic questions based on movies filmed or set in London.

As they took in the sights and sounds of the bustling city, navigating the London Underground and rail networks, they visited famous locations such as Leicester Square, Westminster Abbey, Chinatown, and London Bridge. And of course, no trip to London would be complete without the obligatory visit to the legendary LEGO Store.

A tasty dinner followed by a bit of shopping finished off an extremely hectic day in London.

They were relieved to get back to Purley and put their feet up for the evening. An animated game of Werewolf concluded their last night away.

The weekend was filled with excitement and fun, creating unforgettable memories and sparking new friendships along the way. It was an amazing weekend with an amazing group of people.

Moore Scouts' next event is the Ballinasloe Monopoly Run on Saturday April 11. Moore Scouts, together with Scouts from around the country and teams from the local community, will be swapping out the crowded streets of London for the unique charm of Ballinasloe — it is going to be impressive!

Monopoly locations will be revealed on the day. Teams will be given a map and a list of landmarks with associated monetary values. The team must visit as many locations as possible, take a selfie, and send these back to the "control base". For further information on the run, check out the Moore Scouts Facebook (@moorescouts) and Instagram pages (@5th_roscommon_moore_scouts). See you there.

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New Wander Walking Trail Launch

By Maria Connolly

April sees the launch of the new Wonder Wander Walking Trail for Ballinasloe. These walking trails are part of a national programme created by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) to celebrate and create engagement with Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) throughout the country. The Ballinasloe trail joins Spiddal and Galway City as the first in the county and it was produced by the NIAH in collaboration with the Galway County Council Architectural Conservation Office, Studio Myco and James Grieve Architects.

This immersive trail invites you to discover the vibrant streetscapes in the heart of Ballinasloe. It celebrates the unique architectural heritage and sense of place, offering a chance to explore the diverse history of this iconic area. As part of the project, engaging community workshops and informative drop-in sessions were held, encouraging local participation and storytelling. Special involvement from local schools added an extra layer of richness, enhancing the trail maps and fostering greater public awareness of our built heritage.

Executive Architectural Conservation Officer at Galway County Council, Ann Marie Cusack explained: "This new walking trail shines a light on the town of Ballinasloe highlighting the special architectural and historical character of the area that led Galway County Council to designate it as an Architectural Conservation Area. The trail incorporates the planned formal street pattern laid out in the 18th and 19th century, key urban

and civic spaces. The inclusion of the Scavenger Hunt in the Walking Trails is a family-friendly activity that encourages visitors and residents alike to stop and really look up at the buildings around them – spotting a variety of Diocletian Windows, decorative fanlights, and architectural features of different architectural styles.

"We are delighted to have been able to take part in this Wonder Wander Walking Trail initiative run by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, and very grateful for the support, enthusiasm and hard work from them and from the contractor, Studio Myco and James Grieve Architects.

"Kate, Gavin and James worked with the local



Members of the interpretation team from Studio Myco with Heritage Society members, surveying the town last summer for the trail in the Bianconi Stables to the rear of Gullane's Hotel.

community and schools in the preparation of the trails, and we hope that the walking trail will boost the sense of pride the community feels for its architectural heritage."

The project stakeholders were brought on a tour of Ballinasloe in the early stages by the local Heritage Society Chairperson Conor Johnston and he says "this is a fantastic new resource for the people of the town and visitors alike. It showcases our built heritage as well as our social history in a fun and engaging way'.



The high wall surrounding the current Scoil Croi Naofa site - leading to the Convent where the New Wonder Wander Trail will commence from

Cathaoirleach of the Ballinasloe Municipal District, Cllr. Peter Keaveney commented "The Wonder Wander Walking Trail in Ballinasloe is a fantastic initiative that showcases the town's architectural beauty and rich history as a planned town developed around the river Suck and the Norman Castle'.

The Ballinasloe Cathaoirleach will launch the trail in Ballinasloe Library on April 17 at 11.30 and all in the community are welcome to join in the celebration of the town's architectural heritage. The map will be available to download on the NIAH and Galway County Council website from the launch date, and some paper copies will be available on the day.

There's always a warm welcome in



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Town Talks Heritage Series Underway

By Colm Croffy



Society Deputy Chairperson Pádraic Kilduff, Community Archaeologist Bernie Doherty, Conservation Architect Trevor Wood, and Consultant Archaeologist Fiona Maguire, who were the speakers at the first Town Talks series in the Church Gallery.

Ballinasloe and District Heritage Society held a well-attended AGM in Gullane's Hotel recently. Members looked back on the development of the society since its inception three years ago and agreed a plan of activity for the next 12 months. A new committee was elected and the members are: Conor Johnston (Chairperson); Pádraic Kilduff (Deputy Chairperson); Zara Little Campbell (Secretary); Colm Croffy (Treasurer); Cathal Lucas (PRO); Seán Tully; Joyce Little; Damian Mac Con Uladh and Dr Annraoi Finnegan. A motion of thanks was also proposed and carried for committee members who had served but were not going forward on this occasion.

Officer reports and a full financial report covering all the activities of the group since inception were tabled and approved by the membership.

Ballinasloe Library hosted the first two well-attended events in the "Town Talks" series. Community Archaeologist Bernie Doherty, Consultant Archaeologist Fiona Maguire, and Conservation Architect Trevor Wood gave a fascinating overview of the conservation works being undertaken on Ballinasloe's medieval Bawn Walls and Castle, including a history of the site, works undertaken, and new discoveries since the project commenced. It is hoped that further funding can be secured to ensure the programme of works continues to secure this important site for the future.

In "Town Talks... Photography", Conor Johnston presented his research on the early days of photography in Ballinasloe along with a series of newly digitised historical images related to Ballinasloe sourced from archives in Ireland and abroad. The exhibition was supported by the Galway County Heritage Office. The next event in the series will be a talk by Bríd Mercer on the Woodlawn Estate on Saturday, April 25th at 2.20pm in the Church Gallery. It is hoped that the author of Dr Duggan, Mr Pat Murphy, will present on his life in an autumn talk.

Following on from the success of the community heritage

project "Forged in Fire" last year, the society is once again partnering with Group 8 and the Galway County Heritage Office, with support from Creative Ireland, to tell a foundational story for Ballinasloe and its hinterland. Quarried, Carved and Crafted: Ballinasloe's Limestone Legacy is a collaborative community heritage and arts project celebrating the area's long and distinguished relationship with stone.

Local limestone has shaped the town's historic streetscapes, bridges, boundary walls, civic buildings, and vernacular architecture; and the people of Ballinasloe and its hinterland quarried, carved, and crafted it. The project will explore the geology, history, and cultural

significance of local limestone, focusing on quarries, stonecutters and masons, lime kilns, and the architectural legacy.

Key elements of the project will include an exhibition, podcast, video, and booklet. The project partners are particularly keen to hear from people who themselves, or whose family members, worked in Top Quarries and monumental stoneworks in the area.

A scoping meeting will be held at the end of April and involvement in this project is open to everybody in the community. Details of the scoping meeting will be given nearer to the date on the society's social media accounts @ballinasloeheritagesociety.

Also, if you have any photographs, artefacts, or stories relating to Ballinasloe's limestone history that you would like to have documented, you can email details to ballinasloehistory@gmail.com.

Darren Goode

B.Comm, M.Acc, F.C.A.

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CORRECTION

In our last publication we published a report on the Aughrim Interpretative Centre and ongoing developments in the tourism and heritage sector. The report erroneously stated that a Just Transition Grant was awarded in May 2004. This was an error on our part. The fund did not exist back then; it was in fact allocated in May 2024. We apologise for any inconvenience caused by our compositing error.

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Rosaleen Mills: A Ballinasloe-Born Women's Activist

By Pat Johnston



First woman to speak publicly at the College Historical Society, T.C.D., was Miss Rosaleen Mills, M.A.

Rosaleen Mills at Trinity College



Rosaleen Mills

Bell (1805–1864) and Rosetta Lancaster (1809–1895) of the town. Capt Bell was originally from Newry and, after his career in the army, he served as the first manager of the Bank of Ireland in Ballinasloe. He was vice-guardian of the Workhouse during the famine. Capt Bell lived at Fortwilliam, Ardarn, in a house leased from his father-in-law Thomas Lancaster (1786–1861), another big name who was related to the Trenches and Persses.

The local press offers some details on Rosaleen's early life in the town and her participation

The history of the Irish Free State saw women forced out of public roles and active governance of the nation. They were viewed as passive characters whose chief responsibilities lay within the domestic sphere. Ballinasloe-born Rosaleen Patricia Broughton Mills (1905–1993) was among a group of activists who attempted to shatter this perception.

She was born in 1905 in the District Asylum, one of five children of John and Rosetta Mills (née Dobbin). Her father was resident medical superintendent of the psychiatric hospital. While the family was Church of Ireland, John's mother was a Catholic and some of his sisters were baptised in that faith.

Even though neither of her parents were born in the town, Rosaleen Mills had local ancestry through her Bell and Lancaster antecedents, two powerful local families up to the 19th century. Rosaleen's mother, Rosetta Evelyn Geraldine Dobbin (1870–1937), was the daughter of Catherine Lydia Emily Bell (1836–1876), who was in turn the daughter of Captain James

in events of her social milieu. In 1917, she recited The Learned Rory with her brother Arthur in Whigham Hall (behind the Presbyterian Church on Society St.), and the year after provided three mufflers to the Ballinasloe War Needlework Guild.

Following her primary education at Mount Pleasant School in town, she went to Roedean, a private boarding school in England. She returned to Ireland to study French and Spanish at Trinity College Dublin, continuing after graduation to obtain an MA in modern languages. At Trinity, Rosaleen was an active member of the female-only Elizabethan Society and would continue her links with the university for decades after her graduation.

Inspired by her activist aunts, Rosaleen was active in feminist issues from a young age. With her unconventional background – she was a university-educated Protestant citizen in an increasingly Catholic-influenced state – she was not restrained by traditional views relating to women's position in society in the Irish Free State.

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She came to know prominent feminists such as Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, Mary Kettle and Rosamond Jacob, and one of the first campaigns that she became involved in was opposing Justice Minister Kevin O'Higgins' proposals in 1927 to exclude all women from jury service. A compromise was reached whereby women were able to apply to have their names kept on the state's jury rolls, although men would continue to be automatically included. However, the issue was only resolved under the Juries Act in 1976.

Rosaleen was an active member of the Women's Social and Progressive League (WSPL), which was founded in 1937 to campaign against Articles 40 (personal rights), 41 (the family) and 45 (social policy) of the 1937 Constitution. Article 41, for example, stated that: "by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved". It also said that the state: "shall endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home".

Throughout the late 1930s and 1940s, women's societies continued work for equal citizenship, but the government did not respond. The WSPL was successful in its campaign to introduce the shorter birth certificate which did not include the parents' names, thus obviating the humiliation of those born out of wedlock.

In 1942, Rosaleen rowed in behind the Irish Housewives Association, a non-political, non-sectarian pressure group set

up by a small group of young, middle-class women in Dublin. Rosaleen wrote for the new organisation's journal, *The Irish Housewife*. Attacked by some detractors as being under "Marxian" influences, as Georgia King writes: "Much of what the Irish Housewives Association sought to achieve, such as price controls, school meals for children, timely and affordable public transportation, hygienic food handling, informative food packaging, and improved cleanliness for public washrooms... significantly impacted the way everyday life was experienced in Ireland."

Rosaleen also campaigned on other issues, such as the Mother and Child Scheme to provide free medical care to mothers and children up to the age of sixteen, and the removal of the marriage bar preventing married women from working in the civil service.

She was active in other groups too and sat on the council of the Irish Association of Civil Liberty from its foundation in 1948, serving as its president for a term in the early 1960s. Throughout her life, she continued and deepened her involvement with the Dublin University Women Graduates Association and, in 1963, she was elected president of the Irish Federation of University Women (IFUW). She felt that the priority then was to help the women of the emerging African and Asian nations to ensure they got their fair share of limited educational resources in their countries. She later became vice-chair of the Council for the Status of Women.

Alongside her advocacy for women's, civil and human rights, she also played active roles in the United Arts Club, the Irish Georgian Society, the Irish Association for Social, Cultural and Economic Relations and An Taisce. A keen traveller, she visited most European countries and worked as a translator for the United Nations, being fluent in seven languages.

Rosaleen resided for most of her adult life in Dublin, with regular trips to Galway. She spent her final years in a nursing home in Dublin and died on 17 September 1993, having lived to see Mary Robinson become the first female president of Ireland.

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St Brigid's Golfing Society – 50th Anniversary

By Sean Tully

The St Brigid's Golfing Society was founded on 4th November 1975 by staff members Jimmy Creavin, Liam Curley, Willie O'Rourke, Frank Dooley, Jimmy Flynn and Marjorie King; Joe Gallagher acted as secretary.

Their first outing was on 10th December 1975. The winners were Jimmy Creavin and Michael Craughwell. Second place went to Louis Finn and John O'Dea. Mrs Margaret Creavin won the 1st nett, and second was Mrs K. Callery. Following the presentation, Mr Kevin Callery was selected as captain.

The next outing was arranged in Ballinasloe Golf Club on 28th April 1976. This was a very successful outing with 36 people playing. Again, after the event's prize-giving, Mr Willie O'Rourke was appointed secretary in place of John O'Dea, who had transferred to Galway. Willie O'Rourke remained as secretary for over 25 years. In 1980, a memorial cup in the name of Kevin Callery was procured, to be known as the Kevin Callery Memorial Cup. In 1980, Dr Eileen Brown was elected president. Every year since, the club has had a president and captain elected at the AGM.

The committee 1979–1980: President – Mr Pat Stack; Captain – Mr Jimmy Flynn; Hon. Secretary – Mr Willie O'Rourke; Hon. Treasurer – Mr Michael Moclair.

Over the years, St Brigid's staff made a big contribution to Ballinasloe Golf Club, becoming captain in both Ladies' and Gents', and President in both Ladies' and Gents'.

A decision was made to have an away outing each year. Loughrea, Mountbellew, Portumna, Moate and Athlone all welcomed our members over the years.

In 2015, a very successful celebration of 40 years was held in Ballinasloe Golf Club. Mass was celebrated by Fr Benny Flanagan to honour all members living and deceased.

Officers for that season were: President – Mr Sean Tully; Captain



FRONT ROW: Ray Quinn, Jimmy Flynn, Pat Coleman, Martin Staunton. **BACK ROW:** Geraldine Hodgins, Martin Bellew, John Corbett, Lilly Spellman, Paddy Burke, Margaret Creavin, Sean Tully



The Founders **BACK ROW L TO R:** Wille O'Rourke, Frank Dooley, Joe Gallagher, Jimmy Flynn. **FRONT ROW L TO R:** Liam Curley, Margorie Hamill, Jimmy Creavin

– Mr Michael Mannion; Hon. Secretary – Mr John Corbett; Hon. Treasurer – Mr John Goode.

A booklet to commemorate the forty years was compiled by Mr John Corbett, Hon. Secretary.

In August 2025, an anniversary event was held to commemorate 50 years of the society; a very pleasant meal was had by all. Rev. Ray Sweeney celebrated the Mass to honour all members both living and deceased. President – Mr Martin Bellew; Captain – Mrs Margaret Creavin; Hon. Secretary – Mr John Corbett; Hon. Treasurer – Mr Sean Tully.

At the recent AGM, Liam Curley and Jimmy Flynn were elected as honorary life members of the society. Tributes were paid to all members living and deceased. A scroll was unveiled showing all past presidents and captains over the years, thanks to an initiative by Pat Coleman. It was very fitting that Margaret Creavin was captain, as her late father-in-law Jimmy was one of the founding members and her husband Paddy was captain of Ballinasloe Golf Club.

Appreciation was extended to Mr Paddy Burke for his many years managing our WhatsApp group.

"Get Into Golf" for Women Beginners

Our golf club is running a "Get into Golf" programme specifically for women. It's an eight-week programme comprising lessons with a PGA pro and some fun scrambles on the Ballinasloe course.

There will be an introductory evening on Monday 13 April, with the programme beginning on Tuesday 14 April. Enjoy some exercise, fresh air and socialising! The fee is €100 and all equipment is provided. For further details, contact Edel on (090) 964 126, or Maura on 087 637 1324.





Dr. Patrick Duggan

By Pat Murphy



Dr. Duggan, Bishop of Clonfert for 24 years, from 1872 to 1896

Dr. Patrick Duggan (1813–1896) stands as one of the most influential clerical figures to emerge from County Galway in the nineteenth century. Born in Corofin, near Tuam, he devoted his life to the service of his community, first as a priest in the parish of Corofin and later as Bishop of Clonfert.

He is the man the town centre GAA grounds – Duggan Park, sold to the County Board in the early 30s – is named after.

His leadership spanned a period marked by profound social and political change in Ireland, including

the aftermath of the Great Famine and the rise of movements for tenant rights and national self-determination. Duggan's pastoral dedication, his advocacy for the rural poor, and his involvement in early cultural and political initiatives—such as supporting tenant rights and advising on the foundations of what would become the Gaelic Athletic Association—cemented his legacy as a compassionate and principled leader.

In the annals of the nineteenth-century Irish Church, few figures loom as large or as beloved as Dr. Patrick Duggan. He was a man whose life mirrored the tumultuous transition of Ireland from the devastation of the Famine to the rising tide of the Land War. A tall, blue-eyed polymath with the intellect of a “walking encyclopaedia” and the heart of a saint, he was a rare leader who commanded equal respect from all social classes and religious sects.

Dr Duggan's journey began with a stellar education, first at St. Jarlath's College in Tuam and later at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. At Maynooth, he excelled academically, earning a reputation for intellectual rigour that would later manifest in his work as an effective, graceful writer and journalist. A fluent Irish speaker and a lifelong teetotaler, his principles were formed early and held firmly.

His time as Parish Priest in Corofin remains a blueprint for pastoral care. He was a “model parish priest” who saw the spiritual and physical needs of his flock as inseparable. During the Great Famine, Duggan was a tireless advocate for the starving, famously bringing the Franciscan Brothers to Cummer in 1848 to provide education and relief. His architectural legacy also took root here, as he completed the building of the Corofin church and the Franciscan Monastery in Cummer and oversaw the construction of parochial houses in the Clonfert diocese, ensuring the infrastructure matched the growing needs of the faithful.

In 1872, Duggan was elevated to the See of Clonfert. Despite his high office, he remained a man of profound humility, choosing to live in a modest cabin on Bride Street in Loughrea rather than a palatial residence. This simplicity was fuelled by a deep interior life; he was a man of constant prayer with a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

However, his humility never diluted his courage. Duggan hated injustice, particularly the systemic oppression of the Irish tenantry. He was a staunch supporter of Daniel O'Connell's Repeal movement and later an ardent champion of Home Rule. When the Land League was formed, Bishop Duggan became one of its most potent clerical allies. He championed tenants' rights with a diplomatic but “winning way”, using his influence to shield his flock from the cruelties of eviction.

His commitment to the cause was so absolute that he supported the “Plan of Campaign” in Loughrea and the Ballinasloe Tenant Defence Association. His advocacy frequently brought him into conflict with the British establishment; in 1880, he provided crucial testimony to the Richmond Commission on the plight of Irish farmers, and in 1872 he was famously summoned to court in Dublin to answer for his political activities in the infamous Nolan v Trench case. He was acquitted.

Bishop Duggan understood that the liberation of the Irish people required both land ownership and education. In 1872, he revived the diocesan seminary at St. Brendan's, Loughrea, ensuring a high standard of education for future clergy. In Ballinasloe, he opened St. Michael's

Classical Secondary Day School in 1872 on Bridge Street, providing local youth with a gateway to the professions. The school remained open until 1901, when the diocesan college, a residential and day school, transferred to the ‘Pines’ in Ballinasloe.

His vision extended to the practicalities of modern commerce as well. He was instrumental in bringing the railway link between Loughrea and Tuam, recognising that infrastructure was the lifeblood of rural survival. In matters of social welfare, he founded the Ballinasloe Total Abstinence Association and was the central figure in managing the Portacarron Award, a significant effort to settle land disputes and provide for displaced families. His influence in the Portacarron Award led to the Land Acts of the late 1800s that finally returned the land to the people.

Duggan's cultural impact was so profound that he was offered the honour of being the first patron of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884. While he declined the formal role because of his age, his spirit of national identity and promotion of Irish culture lives on. Today, his name is etched into the landscape of Co Galway: the Dr. Duggan Hall in Corofin and the famed Duggan Park in Ballinasloe stand as monuments to his memory, as does the avenue named in his honour in Ballinasloe in 1953. When Dr. Patrick Duggan passed away in 1896, the nation mourned a man who was described as both a hero and a saint. Though his life's work was centred in the fields and towns of Galway, he was laid to rest in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, among the other giants of Irish history. He left behind a diocese that was better educated, better housed, and more politically empowered than he found it—the legacy of a bishop who never forgot that his first duty was to the poor in the cabins of the west.

Above all, Dr Duggan was a moral and spiritual man. He was also a man of principle, and he promoted justice for all people, good and bad. These values that he held strongly endeared him to all.



Dr. Duggan's grave in Glasnevin, who died in his 83rd year



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Respected Businessman Vincent Earls Remembered

The town, together with the wider community across Galway and the Midlands, was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of one of the most widely respected businessmen of his generation, Vincent Earls.

Vincent was greatly admired as an outstanding employer and business leader, known for his fairness, integrity and generosity of spirit. Through his vision, enterprise and unwavering commitment, he made a significant contribution to the commercial life of Ballinasloe, Loughrea and Athlone, leaving behind a legacy that will long be remembered.

Vincent was born in Clonshecahill, New Inn, in 1937, the youngest of ten, and was greatly loved. While serving his carpentry apprenticeship in the UK, he met Mary Egan at a dance. She was the daughter of Denis Egan, who with his brother John was a member of the Galway team that won the county's first All-Ireland Senior Football Championship in 1925. The couple initially settled in London, where they married in October 1960. There were plenty of opportunities during this time, and they had a sense of ambition and a willingness to embrace the future.

As prospects improved in Ireland, they returned to Galway and made their home in Derrymullen, where they raised their family: Tina, Michael, Stephanie and Declan. In 1972, Vincent established his own construction business, coinciding with a period of significant housing expansion across Ireland. In 1980, he founded Ballinasloe Aluminium. This diversification strengthened the business and contributed to the evolving commercial landscape of the town.

From these foundations emerged a series of landmark projects. Among the most significant was the first EU-funded Structural Grant project in the town, which modernised the livestock mart. Other projects included the Crazy Prices Store development at the former Dubarry site, the Lidl supermarket, the Marina Point development and the award-winning Civic Offices. In



Businessman Vincent Earls who passed away recently.

addition, the company delivered numerous housing developments, including the Millrace Nursing Home and retirement units.

As the business expanded, Vincent's work extended to Athlone, where the company delivered the Radisson Hotel, the landmark Silver Quay project, Westpoint Business Park in Monksland, Inish House and the Inish Carraig Business Centre.

Projects of such scale inevitably brought challenges, yet Vincent approached each with determination, resilience and an unshakeable belief in hard work. Those who worked alongside him often remarked that honesty, perseverance and fairness guided both his business dealings and his personal life.

Behind Vincent's strong presence was a deeply generous heart. It has been a source of great pride for his family to hear of the many quiet acts of kindness he extended to those in need, gestures he rarely, if ever, spoke about himself. He believed strongly in helping others.

His commitment to community life was equally strong. He was involved in many local initiatives, including Derrymullen Handball Club, and was one of the founding directors of Ballinasloe Area Community Development (BACD), once again demonstrating his dedication to the town's future.

Outside of work, Vincent had wide-ranging interests. He followed politics, history, music and film, but above all he loved the GAA. His devotion to Galway hurling and football spanned decades and never wavered. Yet it was with the arrival of his grandchildren that Vincent's great capacity for love shone brightest. He took immense pride in each of them and delighted in their company.

Vincent leaves behind a legacy reflected not only in the buildings and developments that he constructed but in the enduring example of a life lived with integrity, determination, generosity and steadfast devotion to his family and community. He will be deeply missed.

Kevin Walsh – Generous Educator

All in the community and further afield were saddened by the recent passing of Kevin Walsh, a highly regarded history and geography teacher in St Michael's Vocational School and a local public representative.

A native of Glenamaddy, Kevin grew up on a farm in Shannagh with his parents, Tom and Freda, and siblings Imelda, Tony, Fionnuala and Noleen.

It was in his father's forge that Kevin found his love for horses and metalwork. His grá for education and Gaeilge started early in his life in his local primary school. Kevin attended secondary school in St Jarlath's College in Tuam, where he enjoyed playing football and hurling and made lifelong friends.

To fulfil his dream of becoming a teacher, he spent summers working in the UK and the US. He attended UCD to undertake his Bachelor of Arts degree and later completed a Higher Diploma in Education at the University of Galway.

In the early 1970s, Kevin came to Ballinasloe to take up a teaching post in St Michael's, where he would later become Vice-Principal.



Kevin Walsh

He had many happy memories of his teaching career. He met his wife, Dolores, and they built a life in Ballinasloe rooted in family, community and friendship.

He was involved in local politics with Fianna Fáil and was co-opted to Ballinasloe UDC in 1992 and elected Chairman in 1996. He was a member of the VEC and the IVEA. He was a founding member of Ballinasloe Lions Club and editor of their first Ballinasloe Advertiser in November 1984. He always believed in public service and fairness.

Following his retirement, he enjoyed spending time with his friends and family, travelling and attending sporting events: horse racing, football, hurling, rugby and Manchester United.

He was generous. He loved telling stories, especially with Glenamaddy or GAA connections; he had devilment in him, a roguish smile, and

always a glint in his eyes.

To his wife Dolores, daughters Cliodhna, Niamh, Sinéad and Caoimhe, his brother, sisters, relatives and wide circle of friends and neighbours, we offer our sympathy.

Slán abhaile, Kevin, slán go fóill.



Sean O'Grady – Gentleman Supreme

The passing of Sean O'Grady in late January, the Ballinskelligs man who had made Ballinasloe his home harbour for many years, was met with widespread shock and sadness.

Sean was one of life's consummate gentlemen, listeners and redoubtable conversationalists – there was no time of the day, no situation he did not make more pleasurable than being in his company.

His legendary role as Bar Manager & other senior hospitality posts in the famous Hayden's Hotel made him synonymous with the facility, the hotel regulars, the patrons and of course ALL of the wedding guests.

He was particularly admired and respected by the junior bar and waiting staff – for whom he was a patient, encouraging, professional and caring mentor. He had a mighty mind that could remember which Transition Year student in the early 90s went on to do Hotel Management in Cathal Brugha or ended up in Switzerland or the US.

Many of the tributes paid are from those he was kind and supportive to at the very



Sean O'Grady

beginning of their careers when they unexpectedly bumped into him later in life!! He had that rare gift for making everyone feel welcome.

In later years he took on senior roles in Gertie's and Luker's hostelries and, as well as contributing to their business viability, he always had a special Fáilte for those he might have known from Hayden's.

Sean had that rare ability to turn everyday moments into cherished memories—through his welcoming smile, his sharp Kerryman wit, and his endless time for a chat or a laugh. For many, no journey along the Shannon felt complete without stopping to see him, such was the warmth of his hospitality and the depth of his connection to those around.

Our sympathies to his loving partner Antoinette, daughter Kate, son-in-law Ross and the loves of his life; his grandchildren Lottie and Harry, his brothers and sisters, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, nieces, nephews, the Carrick family, neighbours, friends and especially his best friend Paddy.

Bernadette Rothwell – A Life of Community and Kindness

Few people leave a mark on a town in quite the way Bernadette Rothwell has. Born in Cappataggle and later becoming a cherished member of the Ballinasloe community, she represented dedication, warmth, and community spirit at its very best. From her early years growing up in a large family to the many decades she spent contributing to local life, her impact was profound.

Bernadette first trained as a nurse in the Mater Hospital in Dublin; her early career reflected a commitment to caring for others, something that would continue to define her throughout her life. After further training in Cardiff, she practised respiratory care before eventually returning to a life centred around family and community in Ballinasloe.

In 1955, Bernadette married her beloved husband Alec, and together they built not just a home but a life deeply connected to the town's agricultural and business life. Working alongside Alec in the Rothwell auctioneering business, she became widely respected for her knowledge, fairness, and compassion.

Many local farmers trusted her guidance during important moments in their lives, particularly when dealing with land matters. Her understanding of people and her genuine concern for families made her not just a business partner but a trusted figure in the community.

Beyond business, Bernadette's enthusiasm for community involvement was remarkable. She played an active role in Soroptimist International, an organisation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. Through this work she helped promote education, leadership, and opportunity, including organising public speaking competitions that encouraged young women to find their voices and speak with confidence.

Bernadette also embraced the social life of the town with joy. Whether enjoying time with friends, supporting local events, or travelling to agricultural shows with Alec to showcase prize Hereford cattle, she brought energy and warmth to everything she did. Her love for Ballinasloe's traditions, gatherings, and cultural life was always evident.

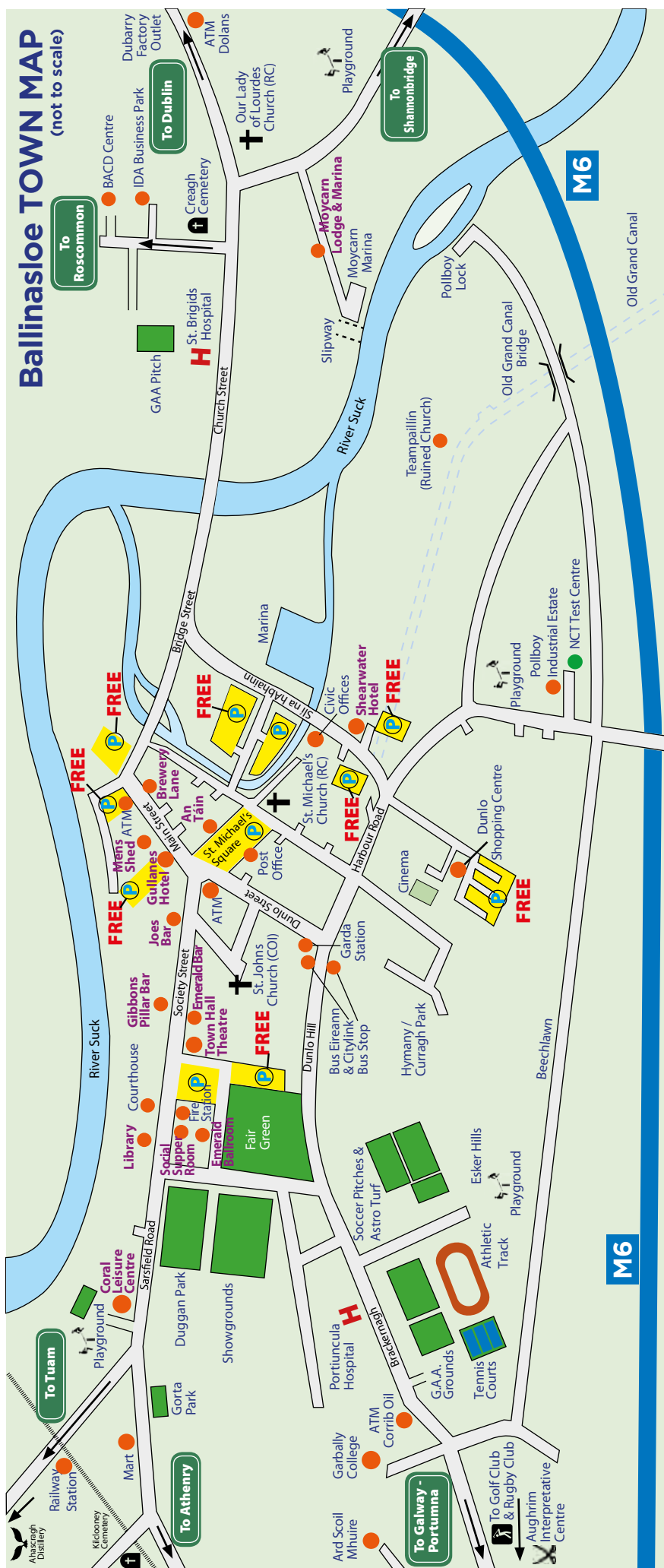
Family always remained at the heart of Bernadette's life. As a proud mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, she delighted in watching generations grow and flourish. She represented a generation that built communities through hard work, friendship, and care for others.

Ballinasloe is richer for having had Bernadette as one of its own, and her legacy of compassion, service, and quiet strength will continue to inspire for many years to come.

To her daughters Mary McGrath and Jane Enraght-Moony, sons-in-law Aidan and Peter, sister-in-law Eileen (USA), her grandchildren, nieces, nephews, relatives, friends and neighbours, we extend our condolences.



Bernadette Rothwell



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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