Dromore West hosts Strictly for Christmas

While most of us have been busily hanging up our Christmas stockings, the good people of Dromore West have been dusting down their dancing shoes as they prepare to put their very unique stamp on a much-favoured fundraiser.

Ten local couples have agreed to take on the ‘Strictly Come Dancing’ challenge but Dromore West Committee have their own innovation to the format by presenting, in addition to the festive season that’s in it, the ‘Strictly for Christmas’ show.

Not even Santa can compete with this event in terms of the excitement it’s generating as the countdown gets underway for participants to showcase their moves at Strictly for Christmas which takes place next Wednesday, December 28 at 8pm in Enniscrone’s Diamond Coast Hotel with all proceeds going to the Dromore West Millennium Enhancement Committee and Dromore West Community Centre to benefit local community events and projects.

Among the contestants all set to put Shakín Stevens to shame are: Jason Kilgannon, who is no stranger to the stage and will be joined under the spotlight on the night by his neighbour from Lugduon, Templeboy, Emma Neary, a chef in Sligo town, will be cooking up a storm of steps with Easky’s John Feeeney; local man, Shane Neary and his dance partner, Berna Horan, will deliver a bit of ‘Up town Funk’ to the show; former Rose of Dromore West, Sarah Cawley will have a solid foundation to the performance with Brendan Kielthy’s hand; Gregory ‘Twinkle Toes’ Feeeney will be stepping it out with Kirsty Murphy of Feeeney’s Filling Station fame; Skreen native, Una Clarke, is back on the dance floor again, having previously danced with the Skreen Community Group and will be joined by local fundraising legend ‘Hot’ Micky McCann; the mechanic from Kilcar, Martin Hegarty, won’t put a spanner in the works for his partner, Dunbeak native, Danielle Dunleavy; history teacher, Lisa Culkin, has been travelling home weekly from Letterkenny to fine tune her dancing skills with the very talented Ollie Golden. Fresh from Sligo’s ‘Hell and Back’ challenge: Strepcough’s James McMoughlin may know everything there is to know about ploughing and vintage cars but he hasn’t come across anything like his Strictly dance partner, Geraldine McCoat, who just wants him to ‘Shut Up and Dance’, while Ciara Hannon, the local school teacher, who was also crowned Rose of Dromore West in the past, will be marking time with the ‘Messi’ of Dromore Villa soccer club, Mark Culkin.

Who will deliver enough fancy footwork to claim the ‘Strictly for Christmas’ title? You will just have to come along to the Diamond Coast Hotel on December 28 to find out.

Doors open at 7pm. Tickets cost €50 and are available from Cost Cutters or Feeeney’s Filling Station, Dromore West; Collery’s Shop, Beltra; Bernie’s in Easky or by contacting Mary Gordon on 086-1637978 or Catherinne Hannon on 087-1246605.

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Mayo Arts funding

The Arts Council has announced funding of €14,500 for Mayo in 2017. The Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Ballina Arts Centre, the Linenhall Arts Centre in Castlebar and the Achill Heinrich Boll Association are among the four local arts centres and organisations that have been awarded funding by the arts agency.

The Linenhall in Castlebar will receive €165,500; Ballinglen Arts Foundation in Ballina will receive €50,000; Ballina Arts Centre receives €50,000 and the Achill Heinrich Boll Association receives €15,000 in further funding.

The announcement forms part of the Arts Council’s planned investment of €66.1 million for 2017, which will see people across Ireland engage with the arts in exciting and innovative ways. The investment represents an increase of €6m, or 8.3 per cent, on the 2016 amount.

EU may fund roads

The cathaoirleach of Mayo Co Council’s Ballina Municipal District Committee, Cllr Michael Loftus, is urging his local authority colleagues to turn to Europe to access funding for long-stalled local road projects.

Speaking at a meeting of the committee on Wednesday last, Cllr Loftus noted the Co Council’s proposals to appoint a European Adviser and the recent call from the local authority’s chief executive for projects that might qualify for funding from Brussels.

Cllr Loftus said he would be proposing Ballina’s long-planned orbital route and an upgrade of the Crossmolina to Lahardane/Castletown road as potential projects that may qualify for funding from Brussels.

‘Why could we not wonder why we should not go to Europe for funding for these roads?’ Cllr Loftus concluded.

New book on Davitt reveals a hidden and intriguing history

A fascinating new book on Michael Davitt has just gone on sale and is certain to be featuring on Christmas shopping lists in Mayo this week. The work of Dr Carla King, the book was a decade in the making and is unquestionably the most authoritative account of Davitt’s life after the Land League. Up to now, biographies of the Strade-born patriot have inevitably focused on the years before and during the Land League, the campaign for which he is best remembered in Ireland.

But Davitt enjoyed a truly varied and fascinating life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Dr King has conducted exhaustive research to bring to life the story of a man whose remarkable impact on Irish and international history has never been properly acknowledged.

The cast of characters that populate the pages of Michael Davitt: After the Land League, 1882-1906 is simply astonishing and reflects the diversity of Davitt’s life. At various stages, Davitt came into contact with Leon Tolstoy, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, Teddy Roosevelt and Randolph Hearst, who was the role model for Citizen Kane, and socialist Eleanor Marx. Lady Agatha Russell, widow of Liberal Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, who had ruled Ireland during the Great Famine, was friendly with Davitt, who, of course, was evicted as a child from the family home at the height of the Famine.

The truly eclectic and extensive activities of Davitt’s mature years, which range from the Rockies to Russia geographically, and include counter-espionage, journalism, penal reform, women’s rights and anti-imperialism, have remained largely in the shade. Indeed, the Land League has become such a dominant feature of Davitt’s life that little consideration has been given to his many other activities. Fortunately, that anomaly has been addressed and Dr King’s book reveals a Davitt who has not only provided a new strand to the story of the Land League but also to the wider history of Irish society. Davitt’s contribution to global politics, journalism and social reform.

In an era that predicates air travel and mass communication, the extent of Davitt’s travels and advocacy is startling. Davitt journeyed across Western Europe to the United States, the Middle East, Russia and Australia, championing the rights of indigenous people, highlighting religious persecution, and seeking to advance the causes of the marginalised and disenfranchised. His passion for international affairs from Anglo-American relations, British imperialism in the Boer War and Russia’s treatment of the Jewish population all feature in this intriguing biography. He even almost bankrupted The Times of London.

Dr King has painstakingly studied thousands of Davitt’s letters, as well as his books, journalism and reports to deliver an utterly compelling and comprehensive representation of an extraordinary man. Often overlooked in surveys of 20th-century history, Davitt gave voice to a strand of radical, secular, anti-imperialist nationalism that was far ahead of its time.

Published by UCD Press, Michael Davitt: After the Land League, 1882-1906, weighs in at more than 700 pages and includes 16 pages of rare and previously unseen images. This impressive hardback publication is selling at €50, which may seem pricey but it really is a magnificent publication that is deserving of every accolade it receives.

Michael Davitt in Russia in 1905, just a year before his death.