

## HUMILITY ABOUNDS IN ARDFERT

How is it possible that it would dare enter the head of a citizen of the greater Tralee area to offend a member of the teaching fraternity? After all teachers work so hard that they are only allowed work about half a day for half the year. They are such an exhausted bunch that the typical teacher spends half the morning in bed for the rest of the year *'sleeping the sleep of the just'*, arise thereafter and drink coffee while troubling over how wicked the world is. They will proceed through each day convinced of their expertise on every matter under the sun, dedicated to imparting it to lesser mortals and follow a routine as regular as the clock. They will dress not in clothes but in costumes for each and every occasion; the teacher still wears the equivalent of the much maligned tweed jacket – perhaps a multi-coloured jumper for men; the female of the teaching species will always wear a garment that makes her look like a parrot among crows – in sharpest contrast to the tracksuit-clad commoners like the rest of us. A teacher who attempts to alter his or her identity as a teacher cannot do so successfully as their peculiarity is part of their essence. Teachers are not such much tweed-clad as tweed-minded. Such an integral and respected part of the community is the teacher that to dare to offend the sanctity of the profession would best be described as a most shocking profanity. One would surmise therefore that this could never happen in the greater regions of Tralee – but it did, and alas in that great citadel of Christianity itself, Ardfer!

A certain cleric, a one Father Barton, once presided with magisterial zeal as Parish Priest over Ardfer. All was going reasonably well until he had occasion to cross swords with a number of teachers in the vicinity. It is not known why this was the case – the root of the matter may have been pecuniary, educational, philosophical, theological or, the Lord save us, even related to noble art of hurling. Whatever the matter it led to one of the most dramatic events in the history – not only of ecclesiastical Ireland but also Ardfer – when the said Father Barton fearlessly proclaimed from the pulpit that the *'teachers of Ardfer are not fit to feed pigs'*

This proclamation, whether it contained any truth or not, was considered an unforgiveable and most vile affront to the integrity of the teaching profession. It has to be said that this unprecedented and consternating pronouncement left the four walls of the church in no small hurry and was broadcast at lightning speed around the parish. At last teachers were given something new to talk to each other about and after much consideration, restraint was deemed to be the best course of action. Instead of reporting the matter directly to His Holiness the Pope in Rome, the matter was referred to the Bishop's Palace in Killarney with the demand that an apology should ensue from Father Barton personally from the place where the statement was uttered and in self-same manner.

All was agog in Ardfer and it is said that extra teaching reinforcements arrived from neighbouring parishes to Ardfer Mass on the following Sundays in anticipation of an apology from the cleric who was now, in the their eyes, as Shakespeare said *'corrupt and tainted with a thousand vices'*. An apology to his lessers would have been unprecedented in the extreme from a man of the cloth. But as the great bard said in Macbeth *'The night is long that never finds the day'*, and it duly came six weeks later as the teachers of Ardfer foamed at the mouth in expectation of their pound of flesh.

The apology came as Father Barton stood at the pulpit and declared with the certainty of sulphur to his divine congregation: *'I wish to retract a statement I made in respect of the teachers of this parish. I say to you now, my dear people, that the teachers of Ardfer ARE fit to feed pigs!'*



## The 1000 yard Stare in Tralee

Learned readers will be familiar with the 1000 yard stare syndrome. This entered into popular discourse during the Vietnam War when veterans, many of who suffered from post traumatic stress disorder, appeared to stare into the distance even in the close company of friends. Of course this was not restricted to Vietnam vets but did occur in closer quarters albeit on very odd occasions. One such occasion was Kerry's defeat to Offaly in 1982. I was among the throngs of Kerry supporters who will never forget the 1000 yard stare on the eyes of the Kerry faithful as we took the train home with our eyes firmly fixed on Casement Station all the way from Heuston. Tralee denizens who are afflicted with an allegiance to the Narries know this feeling well following their demise in the championship last November. Their fate was sealed by a penalty that even the late Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty himself – who saved the lives of thousands of Jews and gentiles in Nazi-occupied Rome during World War 2 and like so many great Irishmen, while honoured by a multitude of nations after the war, was ignored at home – could hardly have stopped.

The reason I bring to mind the 1000 yard stare is that it is now the predominant feature in the countenance of the citizens of Tralee. Every mother's son, daughter and pup bears this shocked look. Professionals look pointless, tradesmen look penniless and the idle are look on from every street corner. The whole town has a look of a groom whose bride has not turned up. One will notice that cars have suddenly got smaller, older and duller.

Flasks and homemade preparations are quickly making up the diet of those who are lucky to have some work. Among the only beneficiaries of the despair are the crows whose population is now flourishing it seems as citizens opt for natural rather than recommended forms of waste disposal.

But let our citizens not despair! I suggest we be like Little Red Riding Hood when she turned up at her grandmother's house and admired the occupant of the bed and so let us declare: *'Oh Tralee, what clean streets you have, what great architecture you have, what beautiful tracksuits your citizens wear, what long faces your people wear, what a long dole queue you have!'*

Perhaps the great positive nature of the Tralee person finds it precedent in the god Corai Mac Dara who was son of the goddess Danu who gives her name to the Paps Mountains. After his head was severed he picked it up and walked away. Although his fate is unknown it is probably not unreasonable to imagine he went off and plotted Kerry's next All-Ireland victory.

## THE DEPRESSOMETER

*Tralee Whistleblower* is proud to announce the world's only device to determine how depressed life is in Tralee. Using a series of indicators it will mark on a scale of 1–100 the extent to which Tralee is depressed. A score of 100% indicates complete Depression while 0% indicates complete happiness. 50% indicates neither happiness nor depression is predominant. These indicators include as follows: the general demeanour of the average citizen; the TPP ratio (tracksuit per head of population), the amounts of complaints about the economy per 10 conversations; the average fall-off in business in selected businesses; the average increase in the Thursday dole queue and Community Welfare Office queues between editions; the average increase in the cinema-going population (said to be relative to depression rates); the average increase in economic advice given by taxi-drivers; the average increase in the amounts of dogs donated to the Tralee pound; the average increase in hair length among Tralee male humans, the average decrease in the female blonde population among; the average decrease in mobile coffee drinkers on a given street; the average increase in denial rates about the seriousness of the depression among the general populace. *Tralee Whistleblower* is proud to announce that Tralee's score on the Depressometer is 78%.

## READERS' REACTIONS

- 'Gas!'
- 'Keep it up!'; 'Keep it blowing!';
- 'A beastly ambition!'
- 'Thou dost affect my manners!'
- 'Wert though clean enough to spit upon!'

### THE ANONYMOUS ECONOMIST—Wear a Smile not a Tracksuit!

Any person with a slant of sense will tell you that good planning is essential for any exercise. While it is almost certainly true that things rarely go according to plan, the very act of planning allows one to envision the future and produces a sort of mental preparedness that can be useful.

I came across an acquaintance of mine recently who is a meticulous planner in matters of the utmost seriousness. He worries not about the essentials like the economic fortunes of us ordinary mortals but is more inclined to be concerned about larger, macro questions. He lives a simple life and spends much of his time lying down in his elevated field on a dry rock overlooking the surrounding landscape, chewing grass and looking heaven ward amidst his happy sheep. He cares not for banks and keeps his coppers safely tucked in Jacob biscuit boxes well out of the reach of a banker. What a simple, orderly life he follows, as I thought.

My most recent meeting with him was as I visited the grave of an old relative—now deceased I hasten to add. I met this gentleman as he exited the cemetery. I enquired of him whose grave he was visiting and he promptly informed me that it was his own. Curiosity got the better of me of course and I asked him to show me this extraordinary object. It was tended to perfection, inscribed with the most beautiful sacred invocations and awaited his burial in due course.

He tended his grave, he explained to ensure that his soul would rest in the finest order being in a mature plot; he prayed a regular *Memorare* and full round of the Rosary as an investment so that his divine account would be in credit by the time he was deposited in the said grave and also so that he would have a bit of elbow room to account for the odd act of lasciviousness between now and then. Economics had been taken to new extremities.

Planning of course is not the only element of good business practice; there are other matters of more immediate interest.

My first lesson in the economics of business was as a four year old when I visited Latchford's confectionery shop beside small Benzers in the heart of Tralee. I could not resist putting my hands on lovely sugar-coated biscuits. With one eye I noticed my mother give me a look that must have years later stopped the millennium clock in Dublin. With the other I saw the most flathuil Mrs. Wilson as she bestowed me with the most charitable look on her face and said 'ah sur' *God help us, he must be starving! Have it of course, love, and enjoy it!* Among the other pressures I endured was the smell of freshly made cakes and pastry of every kind. Needless to say I stood no chance and, teaming with the mid-morning appetite of a youngster, duly sunk my teeth into the biscuit and sealed my fate for a thrashing after my mother and I landed home.

The lesson I learned was not the pricing of the good, which my mother had to pay; it was not the quality of the good which was beyond doubt; it was rather the nature of the sale. The lady in question was ever so friendly and I would say this friendly nature was partly if not overwhelmingly responsible for my consumption of the good. She was an artist saleswoman. Even though she knew that I as a customer acted above my station she—despite of the attentions of my accomplice—persuaded me to partake the crucial action which ensured the sale. This was done with tact, with interest and with zeal.

A recent shopping expedition in the town of Tralee revealed to me that this elegance of manner in the salesperson is a rarity in the town. Retail workers do not bestow affection upon customers. They do not greet customers and one is very lucky to hear a 'thank you' from any of them. The art of conversation is as dead the British Empire in Tralee. This is why I will revert to shopping outside of Tralee town centre even if I have to pay a higher price for my custom. One's custom should be valued, sought after and prized like it is in Killarney, Listowel and Castleisland and in certain but few shops in the periphery of our municipality.

I cannot explain the Tralee phenomenon but would hazard the guess that it has its roots in the fact that retail stores are used to taking orders and not making sales over the last ten years or so. They have had little need to win customers as customers were assured. This is no longer the case. But I am sure that there are far more complex reasons beyond the scope of this article.

Where economic fortune is concerned it is vital that people do not simply wait for things to pick up. Locals must do what they can to improve their own lot and encourage local spending. It is therefore my humble advice to locals to be more friendly and just wear a smile!

### 'BURN BALLYMAC!'

*When Randolph Churchill finally left hospital in a relieved state after a tumour, which had been the source of much concern was removed and found not to have been malignant, the great wit Evelyn Waugh commented: 'What a triumph of medical science it is that the one non-malignant part of Randolph Churchill has*

*been removed!' So much for what was left!*

*The same could not be said for Tralee when a certain Major was unceremoniously removed from its hallowed grounds during the 1920's. His demise is outlined below:*

The name of the sacred pastoral province of Ballymac, the learned reader will know, has been cited in this publication in a previous edition when we referred to the handballing exploits of its citizens and in particular of one Roundy McEllistrim who, in his wellies, bamboozled some visiting yanks who professed competence in the game of handball. The Ballymac fondness for objects of a spherical nature is of course historic. Whereas nowadays these are in the form of handballs in days of yore, they were brought to Tralee town in the form of the most delicious apples and other fruits from the Arabella region of Ballymac. But perhaps the most potent object ever to be promulgated in Ballymac is of the martial kind – the pellets from a shotgun. Ballymac was synonymous with revolution and it said that it was at Gortalea in that great parish and not in Solohedbeg in Tipperary that the first shots of the War of Independence were fired.

In November 1920, Tralee was under curfew. A glance at school roll books of the period will reveal that the RIC ordered their closure such was the violence in the town. Much of this was perpetrated by Major McKinnon and his charges in the Black and Tans who, it is said, ruled the town with ignominious abandon and was known to swagger through the streets in the charge of drunken Black and Tans with guns to the ready, instilling fear in its citizens and engaging in wanton acts of the cruelest violence. His name blanches the faces of the people of Ballymac to this day as it is associated with some of the vilest atrocities of the War of Independence.

His demise came on Tralee Golf Course. It was according to T. Ryle Dwyer perhaps the best shot fired on the said golf-course. It came from an IRA marksman atop a tree on the final green. Lest the learned reader suggest that we would ever take pleasure in anyone's death – saint or sinner – there was one consolation for the Major. His final word as he collapsed and left this mortal coil was a venerable one – 'Ballymac'. On being chastened by the fatal bullet he is said to have attempted to invoke Shakespeare's Cleopatra upon his assassin with the words 'the most infectious pestilence upon thee!' but in the circumstances could only manage to cry out 'Burn Ballymac!' It is not known whether the shot constituted a winning one; but the War of Independence continued unabated.

### YES, HE WAS A STAR

Every time I see the empty pedestal in the Square it brings to mind the expression '*Elvis has left the building*' but somehow it is not the music of Elvis that enters my mind but that of Tralee's own Christy Hennessy. It was he who for me represented all that was best about Tralee. He was humble with nothing to be humble about, great fun, imaginative, a marvellous ambassador for the town, the King of Citizens. He was our Mozart, our Plato, and—better than any of them—Christy was '*one of our own!*' He was one of those people who made one proud to be from Tralee. So let that lovely pedestal in the Square host a marble statue of our own star, Christy Hennessy.

### Miraculous Events in the Square as Tralee Sinks to the Strains of a Musical Duo

A few days ago I happened upon the most sublime music that entered my ear since the late great Michael Donovan's *Radio Tralee* hurtled the most mellifluous airs through the streets of the centre of the town back in the early 1980's. These airs were played by two Slovaks—one a violinist and the other a violist—who were quite happy to play anything from Dvorak to

## REVOLUTIONARY WRITERS & POETS WANTED

Please contact the Editor



**Vote No. 1  
Leonard O'Donnell  
Fine Gael**  
See  
[www.leonardodonnell.com](http://www.leonardodonnell.com)

Danny Boy upon request. Their music was a thing of beauty and matched—like a crystal chandeliers would a palace ballroom—our very own and noble Square. The music was beautiful and at once poignant. It brought to my mind the melancholic string quartet that played while the Titanic was listing as it made its dismal descent to the bottom of the Atlantic. Alas there was one problem; the present duo while having the very fine music and spirit necessary to its best performance did not have the tuxedos to match. Within half an hour—and this is where the miracle comes in—as I returned through the Square, I noticed both dressed in tuxedos! Did anyone else notice this? In concert with my memory of the Titanic movie I asked them to play '*Amazing Grace*'. Before they finished this elegant piece I fled with my loved one from the deck of the Square before my fate was sealed.

### The Power of Delusion

- A Contribution from a Philosopher

The power of the Mind can do practically anything. Oscar Wilde was not imaging things when in the *Remarkable Rocket* he referred to those people who, when they say something often enough it becomes true in the end. How many of us are prepared to believe one thing even when all the evidence points to the exact opposite and be content and be content to be so content? We find therefore that the approach of Mr. Gradgrind in Charles Dickens' .....who demands of his apprentice teacher that he should teach the children facts and only facts for as an empty formula. Imagination and creativity are special even if it removes us far from reality so much so that many of us are happy to live in the fantasies of movies, TV programmes and books! A curious case of our love of delusion is referred to by Patrick Geoghegan in his outstanding biography of Robert Emmet. Learned readers will know that bold Emmet met his demise having been convicted of High Treason for instigating rebellion in 1801. Following his execution, a company of actors who re-enacted events surrounding the patriot's death decided to return a verdict of not guilty in fear of the reaction of the crowds who had come to witness their dramatic presentation. Perhaps the Minister for Finance might adopt the same strategy for the political well-being of the government on April 7th next?

*Note from Editor:*

*Assertions made in this publication are based on the best available knowledge of the writers. We welcome any corrections of fact and are happy to include these in subsequent publications.*