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# PAT FLANAGAN

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## The airy fairy Healy-Raes are at it again

THERE are all sorts of strange goings-on in Co Kerry where if the fairies are not interfering with the roads the deer are actually trying to take control of the place. It's apparently got so bad Deputy Danny Healy-Rae wants the Army to put manners on these hardy young bucks. A couple of years ago he claimed the fairies were causing problems in the same area. And last year his brother, Deputy Michael Healy-Rae, called for our troops to deal with "out-of-control" rhododendron plants in Killarney National Park. Would it not be possible for the two lads to enlist the help of the Little People to deal with the deer and the plants and save the State a crop of gold?

➤ MANY congratulations to Eoghan Murphy on reaching the big 10,000 homeless mark, it's a testament to Fine Gael's ideological opposition to providing what were once known as council houses. His party sees houses and apartments as means of making profit rather than making homes and that is why they invited in the vultures. The only way we are going to get rid of the housing and homelessness crisis is if we get rid of Fine Gael.

## It's the same old Tory for FG cronies

THERE were plenty of red faces when a suggestion by the DUP's Jeffrey Donaldson at the Fine Gael national conference last weekend that Ireland should rejoin the Commonwealth received a round of applause. Maybe that's not surprising as for many Irish Tories the party never left the Commonwealth. It was interesting that Fine Gael invited reps from the DUP, SDLP and Alliance Party to their conference but did not extend the same courtesy to Sinn Féin. Last year the Conservative Party invited deputy leader Michelle O'Neill and the DUP's Arlene Foster to their conference, which goes to show Fine Gael is more Tory than the Tories themselves.

# Anti-vax quacks are a disease in our society

I'm all for individual freedom, but being free to watch your child needlessly die in agony is maybe taking personal liberty a bit too far. Believe it or not, there are people who are willing to sacrifice their children on the altar of ignorance rather than get them vaccinated. There are now fears we are on the cusp of a major measles epidemic and the country is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of mumps in years. There is a good chance children will die or suffer lifelong damage. The reason for this is not an act of God, quite the opposite, it's because we are living in an age of ignorance where some would rather

believe utter bollocks from a Facebook crackpot rather than scientific advice from a trained physician. We even have a political party led by Ireland's answer to Katie Hopkins which is campaigning on an anti-HPV vaccine platform. The Anti-Corruption Ireland party also has the backing of one Jim Corr, who knows as much about vaccines as he does about property development. In the age of Trump and Brexit, some people are willing to believe almost anything, except the truth.

Figures from the HSE show 300 Irish women get cervical cancer every year, and 90 of them will die from the disease. One of these tragic women was vaccine campaigner Laura Brennan, who died last week aged just 26. The Irish Cancer Society believes 12 women a year will survive cervical cancer thanks to her work and that of other HPV vaccine campaigners. God only knows

how many lives have been needlessly lost thanks to those who have spread lies and misinformation about the life-saving protection vaccines can offer. Being old enough to have lived through a polio epidemic I know first hand of the horrors of that disease. If you mention polio today many people don't know what you're talking about because it has been virtually eliminated in this part of the world thanks to vaccination. The disease was eliminated from the US in 1979 and from the entire Western Hemisphere in 1991. Had social media and the anti-vaxers been around back then, this major medical milestone would not have been achieved. The US is now in the grip of a major measles outbreak and the authorities in a New York suburb have been forced to ban unvaccinated children from public places. Anyone who has ever read this column will know I have been critical of the current and past health ministers and the health service in general. But I'm 100% with Simon Harris when he says anti-vaccination campaigners should "cop on". That's not to say some people who do get vaccinated might not have a reaction or suffer some adverse effects – but the vast majority of those inoculated do not. On the other hand, the dreaded diseases such as smallpox have

been removed from the world as a result of a mass vaccination and the virus has now been completely eliminated. Other diseases could also be destroyed if the take-up of vaccines reached close to 100%. Imagine, all these dreadful diseases which blighted the lives of children down the centuries, gone forever. Thankfully Facebook is taking action to combat misinformation about vaccines, after similar moves by Pinterest and YouTube. There has been an explosion in the number of cases of mumps here since the start of the year – 18 in the North West alone since last Monday. It is being blamed on the scare caused by struck-off doctor Andrew Wakefield who wrongly claimed a link between the MMR jab and autism.

This couldn't be further from the truth as new research in Denmark that examined data on 657,461 children found those who got the MMR jab were 7% less likely to develop autism than kids who didn't. Then again there are those who won't let years of scientific research get in the way of a good conspiracy theory. Indeed, in this age of ignorance, there are some parents who will refuse to vaccinate and put their trust in the Facebook physicians but the reality is Jim (Corr) won't fix it.



IGNORANT Jim Corr

People will now believe anything but the truth



TROPHY LIFE Winner Mairead Ronan and dance partner John Nolan

## RTE's licence to kill DWTS

DANCING With The Stars could be cancelled unless the licence fee is raised, a producer of the show has claimed. Heaven forbid. Should it not be the other way around where licence payers get a discount for having to endure this s\*\*\*e which, for a start, is based on a false premise as there are no stars involved. Apparently the station is stuck for cash and won't be able to produce such gems as DWTS if the current €160 is not increased. Tapping us for money is one thing but being led on a merry dance with veiled threats is certainly a unique way of looking for a licence fee hike. When RTE can pay Ryan Tubridy and Ray D'Arcy €500,000 salaries it's not surprising cries of poverty will fall on deaf ears.

## DUFF IS 'TALKIN' BALLS



DAMIEN Duff's criticism of Irish fans for their tennis ball protest was way offside and shows he is out of touch with those who begged and borrowed to follow their team to the ends of the earth. Soccer supporters have every right to feel cheated and betrayed by the FAI as they have been badly let down by people

whose main goal seems to have been netting a large fortune. It certainly didn't take long for Duff to become part of the establishment and his claim that the fans could have protested elsewhere was just plain silly. Like where? He was a great player in his day, but as a pundit he's on a wing and a prayer.



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## Elementary to target the well-heeled

I HAVE no doubt the Criminal Assets Bureau do a great job and they have had some notable successes in recent years.

But I wouldn't be the first to point out the definition of criminal can be rather narrow. Think of all the skulduggery over the years involving bankers, politicians and business tycoons. CAB chief Det Chief Supt Pat Clavin was on Today With Sean O'Rourke rightly highlighting the good work they do.

Remember that second mobile phone licence and the damning findings of the Moriarty tribunal?

Wouldn't it be great if the CAB could go after Moriarty? Sadly the well-connected are not only immune to prosecution, they're also immune from investigation.

HALLOWEEN may have passed but a local council appears intent on keeping the festivities going as this week they were preoccupied with bats. Some Cork County councillors blame them for holding up the construction of a reservoir for Kildorrery. Cllr Timmy Collins even came up with a cunning plan: "We should shoot all the bats and get rid of them." Steady on, surely a few cloves of garlic and a crucifix would do the trick?

## Minister is positively misguided

POSITIVE discrimination for me is a contradiction in terms but Minister of State for Higher Education Mary Mitchell O'Connor is all for it... when it suits her.

She wants to create female-only professorships who will get the job over better qualified male candidates.

But, wiping the floor with her on RTE's Prime Time, Prof Patricia Casey asked the minister why isn't she going to impose a similar system on primary teacher recruitment where over 85% of the staff are women.

If the Government must use positive discrimination they should apply it to junior ministers and promote ones who are actually capable of doing the job.

# Proper healthcare? Leo, you're taking the p\*\*s

HAVING a metre-long plastic tube shoved up your willy first thing on a Monday morning is not the best start to the week. On the other hand if you want to see how dedicated doctors and nurses are keeping the dysfunctional health service from falling asunder it's a good vantage point.

It also leaves you in no doubt there's two Irelands when it comes to healthcare and the difference between life and death can depend on which of them you can afford to live in.

A few weeks back I was an emergency case at the Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda and, within a matter of minutes of staggering in the A&E door,

I was on the table undergoing the above procedure.

To be blunt I hadn't peed properly for almost 36 hours and being the hero I am stuck it out until I could see my own doctor.

I did, but by that time I was on the point of collapse and the only thing for it was to have a long plastic tube inserted directly into my bladder to relieve the pressure.

Having been escorted past at least 40 patients in the Lourdes' A&E I realised how lucky I was to have such dedicated doctors and nurses to look after me.

I was ushered past maybe a dozen patients on trolleys in search of a cubicle. On one side was an elderly man with his head covered by a blanket emitting a constant low moan.

Some were eating their meals on the trolleys as a man in a dazed condition in an adjoining cubicle was told he may get a bed soon. He had been there that long he didn't seem to care.

I was told it was fairly quiet by the Lourdes' standards but still the doctors and nurses were rushed off their feet. You could actually hear the stress in the nurses' voices as they saw one patient after the next.

After some tests, Dr Paddy informed me I probably have a disease called benign prostatic hyperplasia. I said I'd never heard of it but I like the first word.

Apparently it's an enlargement of the prostate gland and has something to do with testosterone and the like

and it affects men of my age. While it might be benign, there's no real cure, which cancels out the benign bit.

Funny the things that go through your mind when you're told you have a serious condition caused by hormones.

I thought maybe this is retribution for all the times this column took the piss out of Twink and Menopause The Musical.

That turns to sheer revenge when I'm told the tube up my willy and the catheter (bag) strapped to my leg will have to remain there for at least six weeks, the earliest I could be seen again.

How could it be any other way when hospitals like the Lourdes are running flat out just to stand still?

This is probably a man thing but guys there's no upside to being fitted with a catheter, except maybe being able to have a slash in O'Connell Street without being arrested.

On my release I moved from one Ireland to the other when I visited my doctor who makes one phone call and before I get home from his surgery I'm contacted by Bon Secours private hospital with an appointment two days later.

After a visit to a consultant urologist the catheter and tube are removed and I've forgotten about Menopause The Musical. It's now Free Willy.

This is how it works in Leo Varadkar's

Republic of Opportunity, although he seems to have moved on to his next meaningless slogan.

Not being able to afford insurance shouldn't mean you have to wait months or years for treatment in a country where some workers pay up to half their wages in tax and social insurance.

Despite Fine Gael's promise of universal healthcare by 2016 and Enda Kenny's pledge to end the hospital trolley scandal way back in 2008, Leo's party have all but destroyed the health service.

Michael Martin this week claimed the Taoiseach has "given up" on the health service and I've seen first hand that this is true.

But on the other hand it doesn't really matter to Fine Gael as most of their voters have private health insurance. That is why there will be no change.

When Leo visits public hospitals the patients are hidden in case his eyes are offended by the suffering orchestrated and perpetuated by his party.

And for this man, who is a doctor himself, to recently attempt to put the blame for hospital overcrowding on frontline staff, is simply despicable. These people are secular saints.

This is also the same geezer, who as Health Minister, went missing during a severe Christmas trolley crisis.

If you want Leo I'll pass on the name of my urologist. He's excellent, because you are taking the piss.



OUT OF TOUCH Leo



OFF YOU GO John should be shown red card

### There's two Irelands when it comes to healthcare

## Blow final whistle on Delaney reign

WHILE Martin O'Neill and Roy Keane had been getting it in the neck for failing to deliver results, the rot affecting Irish soccer goes right to the top.

Even diehard supporters are disillusioned - as seen by the half-empty Aviva Stadium last week - while the domestic game is also in the doldrums.

How can fans tolerate a situation where the League of Ireland winners get €110,000 in prize money - less than a third of FAI boss John Delaney's €360,000 salary.

Two years ago, John's pal Denis O'Brien claimed he was capable of running anything.

He said: "John Delaney could run UEFA, easily. He could run FIFA as far as I'm concerned."

You know he's right... because on his watch, Irish soccer looks to have been run into the ground.

## NOT A LOTTO SENSE TO COMPO PAYOUTS

WHEN it comes to the courts and compensation it's akin to a game of roulette where those with the least convincing claims seem to get the biggest payouts.

Who could forget the young woman who was awarded half-a-million euro for injuries she received after recklessly holding on to a moving Luas carriage.

On the other hand, Detective Garda Eamon Moran, who had his face badly slashed while deporting a Nigerian thug, received a paltry €25,000 damages. He should have got at least five times that amount.

The High Court heard had there not been a doctor on board the flight to Lagos he might have bled to death.

The moral is if you are going to court, say you have whiplash. It's like winning the Lotto.



DESERVING Det Garda Eamon Moran





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Labour must be feeling left out over deal

LABOUR isn't too happy about Fianna Fail's partnership with the SDLP and neither is a good chunk of that party up North.

Some in Labour youth are claiming it's a shame to see a decline of the left in Northern Ireland which is a bit ironic when while in Government they were to the right of Fine Gael.

The only thing left about the party founded by Big Jim Larkin is the number of TDs they have left after they betrayed their supporters.

Incredibly there are now reports Labour may link up with SDLP dissidents and stand in the North, which is pure comedy when they'll be lucky to get any seats down here in the next general election in the South.

IF we've learned anything from the National Children's Hospital scandal it's Fine Gael can't be trusted with public finances.

The Irish Tories have become estranged from probity in recent years.

But the public are now supposed to be reassured by a report into the outrageous hospital overspend by accountants PCW.

Guess when it's due to be published? March 29, Brexit Day, when, like the spiralling costs, it won't be noticed.

## Time to bin this rubbish bylaw plan

IMAGINE being asked to provide evidence you did not commit a crime which did not take place?

Such a scenario is straight out of Monty Python but it could soon come to pass if "bin police" crack down on those who don't dispose of waste properly.

Proposed new bylaws could allow local authorities to use the Eircode system and data from the waste companies to check if homes are signed up for collections. If not the "bin police" can impose fines.

The proposals raise serious data protection issues, but who worries about such technicalities in a State which forces the public to use a Public Service Card which, according to a leading lawyer, has no "lawful basis".

# Joke's on England as it kisses the EU goodbye

THE only good thing about the tragic comedy that is Brexit is the English will never again be able to tell an Irish joke.

How could they poke fun at the Paddies when they are the laughing stock of the world for what has been described as "one of the most ridiculous acts of self-harm that any country has ever inflicted upon itself".

Still, you can only laugh as the day after it was revealed the UK health service is stockpiling body bags in anticipation of a Brexit apocalypse, MPs were being amused by Valentine's Day odes in the House of Commons about leaving the EU.

Parliament leader Andrea Leadsom's Roses Are Red poem claimed "our future is bright, with a good deal in sight" as an event that could cause death and destruction looms.

Another MP chipped in about a possible shortage of Viagra and a minister said this might determine whether or not there would be a hard or soft Brexit.

But we shouldn't laugh because ruined Britannia could drag this country down with it when it crashes out of the EU on March 29.

Like him or loathe him Bertie Ahern was a rock of sense in an otherwise sea of madness when he addressed a House of Commons Brexit committee.

The former Taoiseach was asked how proposals put forward by Brexiteers for Ireland



JACOB REES-MOGG



DONALD TUSK

to rejoin the UK was going down on this side of the Irish Sea.

"Well, I'll be just be kind and say not very well," he replied in what has to be the understatement of the year.

To members of a parliament which appears to have replaced reality with a fetid and frayed Victorian fantasy, Bertie explained: "Unfortunately we have an 800-year past of difficulties and that's just the reality of our history."

Poor Bertie had to point out to the deluded politicians there is a slight difference between the boundaries that separate London boroughs and the Irish border.

All this must have come as a terrible shock to a Tory establishment which actually believes the rest of the world

will be looking to "global Britain" for leadership when the reality is they are laughing at the empire with no clothes, probable food and medicine shortages.

We should remember there are small pockets of similar lunatics on this side of the pond who would like to see Ireland exit the EU along with England and Wales, as our friends in the North and our Celtic cousins in Scotland very much want to stay in Europe.

It is hard to believe there are organised groups here who despise the likes of European Commission president Donald Tusk while looking

up to toffs such as Nigel Farage and Jacob Rees-Mogg.

They see a multimillionaire vulture fund boss like Rees-Mogg as something of a rebel while branding an actual former revolutionary such as Tusk, who was imprisoned by the Soviets for fighting to win Poland's freedom, as a globalist capitalist.

There are those on this island who, like the Brexiteers, dream of a glorious past which never existed forgetting that Ireland was a basket case economy before we joined the then EEC.

On the other hand many across the water still believe if they can keep out Johnny Foreigner, Morris dancers will return to the village green and all will again be right in Old England.

Of course the real reason for Brexit and why a nation appears to be willing to self-destruct rather than face the reality is English nationalism, racism and xenophobia.

With those who support the so-called Brexit here it's a similar toxic mix cloaked in nostalgic nonsense about taking back control and running our own affairs, conveniently forgetting the mass unemployment and emigration and how the Catholic Church called the shots when it came to making laws.

Thankfully the vast majority here, around 90% in the last few polls, want to remain in the EU because, unlike the majority of the English public, they have no illusions about the past and the last thing they want is to return to it.

Real reason for Brexit is racism and xenophobia



JAB DONE American Ethan Lindenberger

## Teens getting the needle

IT'S normal for teenagers to rebel and mostly it's about trivial things such as clothes and hairstyles.

They usually look back in horror at their actions... but they can't if they're dead.

American Ethan Lindenberger, 18, is defying his parents and is getting pricked with multiple needles - and it's not a tattoo, he's getting himself vaccinated.

His mother was influenced by online anti-vaccine pseudoscience and

never bothered to get him inoculated against diseases like hepatitis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella or chickenpox.

In this country there have been 278 cases of mumps in the first six weeks of the year - a 525% increase on the same period in 2018.

This is being blamed on the vaccine scare caused by struck-off doctor Andrew Wakefield, left, and others who wrongly claimed there was a link between the MMR jab and autism.

Isn't it funny how parents are worried about young people being damaged by social media when their use of it can, and does, inadvertently kill their kids.



## Keeping evil males appy

THE likes of Google and Apple like to portray themselves as progressive corporations but the reality couldn't be further from the truth.

Rights campaigners claim the Absher phone app is being used to help keep women enslaved in Saudi Arabia by allowing men to monitor their movements.

They must get permission from a male to travel and it is alleged a feature sends out a text if an unaccompanied female tries to go through passport control, preventing them from escaping abusive relationships.

Suppose it's pointless calling on the Irish Government to intervene when it is suspected it helped Saudi Arabia get a seat on the UN body protecting women.

