



JOHN BURNS: ATTICUS
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Atticus: Council motions have gone to the dogs

John Burns



While Dublin faces intractable problems with housing, vacant sites and litter, some of its councillors waste the city council's valuable time by virtue signalling.

Typical is Michael O'Brien of Solidarity — the Left Alternative, who sent out a press release after last week's meeting to boast that his motion had been passed to call for an end to the Spanish government policy of Basque separatist prisoner dispersal. "Terms of motion will be communicated to the Spanish ambassador and Oireachtas committee for foreign affairs," O'Brien said grandly — as if either of them could give two hoots.

Down in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown council, meanwhile, they're simply barking. Tomorrow night's meeting will hear a motion from Labour's Carrie Smyth, calling on the chief executive who is "rolling out public drinking water fountains to parks" to ensure there's a special one for dogs.



Ardfry in Co Galway ROBERT O'BYRNE

Ardfry castle history laid bare

Ardfry in Co Galway is one of the faded glories featuring in Robert O'Byrne's smart new tome *The Irish Aesthete: Ruins of Ireland* (Cico Books). The 18th-century castle has a colourful history. One former owner was Joseph Henry Blake, 3rd Lord Wallscourt, who "liked to walk about his house wearing no clothes until Lady Wallscourt persuaded him to carry a cowbell in his hand when nude, so maidservants had notice of his arrival".

In 1973, director John Huston used Ardfry in the shoot for *The Mackintosh Man*, starring Paul Newman. He gave the house a new roof and windows, then set it on fire. The ruin has been for sale many times since, most recently at an auction in 2015 with an asking price of €1.8m.

Glasnevin duo take a well-earned rest

To lose one leading light was unfortunate, but Glasnevin Trust losing a second stalwart has struck the Dublin rumour mill as an unfortunate coincidence. The trust manages the massive Glasnevin cemetery, plus four others, three crematoria, and a museum. In fact it's the "leading provider of burial and cremation services in Dublin", and employs 94 people.

George McCullough, its chief executive, recently retired from the role after 33 years, and his position has been advertised. It now emerges, however, that John Green will shortly retire as chairman of the trust, a position he has held for 12 years.

Why the rush to the graveyard exit? Nothing more than the fact both played a big part in the “decade of centenaries”, and have earned a rest.

RTE keeps mum about mystery Fitzgerald fan

RTE has revealed it got a representation from a politician after replacing Martina Fitzgerald as political correspondent in December. It got a text message and several emails, the station says, from a politician and 26 members of the public. Who was the politician, we asked using the Freedom of Information Act. Not telling you, said RTE. This is “personal information”, and “we do not believe the public interest would best be served by releasing it”.

Presumably, the politician is one of those who tweeted support for Fitzgerald. Mary Mitchell O’Connor said she was “annoyed”, Heather Humphreys was disappointed, Catherine Ardagh said RTE was “making a huge mistake”, and Lorraine Clifford-Lee was “shocked and disappointed”. Did any of them then protest in person to Montrose?



Belfast artist Trina McKillen’s artwork Bless Me Child for I Have Sinned, in the Laband gallery in Los Angeles, includes a cushion of nails for the priest beside a child’s

McKillen makes a holy point in City of Angels

Bless Me Child for I Have Sinned is the title of an impressive artwork by Trina McKillen, a graduate of the National College of Art and Design in Dublin, and now based in Los Angeles. Displayed in the US city's Laband gallery, the piece is a glass confession box in which the roles are reversed: the priest kneels, on a steely cushion of nails, before a child's white seat.

It's part of an exhibition, Confess, which takes as its theme the Catholic church's cover-up of clerical sex abuse. McKillen, originally from Belfast and a sister of businessman Paddy Sr, says she was inspired by her mother walking away from the church aged 84, after a lifetime's devotion, because of her revulsion over clerical abuse.

America Magazine, a Jesuit publication, says of the exhibition: "Rather than rubbing our faces in the horror . . . or trying to convey some sort of pedantic message, McKillen offers a set of contemplative spaces in which people are allowed to get in touch with their own feelings and experiences."

Might an Irish gallery bring it here?

Victory for O'Brien (Jr)

Having to testify in a High Court libel action on Thursday meant Denis O'Brien missed seeing his son play for Gonzaga in the Leinster Schools junior cup. Patrick's team beat Kilkenny College 26-3, so father and son will get another day out in Donnybrook.

- Photographer John Minihan is to be honoured today by the Made of Athy musical legacy project. A plaque commemorating Minihan, who grew up in Athy, will be unveiled outside Doyle's Bar.

Singer-songwriter Neil Hannon, who was honoured yesterday, tells us he has completed writing the music for Pope Ted: The Father Ted Musical. Presumably it's an ecumenical matter.

Sinn Fein in trumped up charges over GAA airtime

There is something distinctly Trumpian about the way Sinn Fein is stirring up a false tribal grievance against the BBC. The Ulster Council of the GAA is having to defend the station from persistent Sinn Fein claims that it is not showing enough live championship matches, after party deputy leader Michelle O'Neill unfairly accused the Beeb of having "a clear bias against Irish national games".

As the Ulster Council explained: "The BBC don't have the rights to show live championship games. The rights are dealt with nationally and lie with RTE."

In fact, the BBC is so keen to cover GAA games that it sends camera crews to four times more than RTE will let it show, and then waits to see which it is permitted to broadcast.