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TRALEE'S GREATEST MICRO-PUBLICATION FOR THESE DEPRESSIONARY TIMES

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## THE ART OF THE HURLER

Being fond of the whistle, I have often been wont to lambast the over-exuberant protagonist of the great game of hurling who engage in this tribal occupation as though it were a craft when in reality it is an art.

The holding of the camán or hurley surpasses the ingenuity demanded by its highly esteemed cousin, the golf club. While the latter involves the careful is of a still position ball atop a fragile wooden platform and is struck with the elegance of what one might apply to the conducting of Beethoven's 5th, the art of the hurler is of a different kettle of caviare. Gentility, femininity and caddycars and ball-washers are left at home. Hurlers – good ones that is – engage in a lightning fast combat. One cannot stand back and admire one's shot as one would reflect on the downing of a shot of a gentleman's brandy. Oh no, there is no time for vanity in hurling. The ball is struck from all angles, at all speeds and in circumstances that if it were not sport could easily be confused with planeless kamikazism. All that is missing from an encounter with a hurley is the smell of gunpowder – particularly in North Kerry, where the only person in a given household who didn't play is the Sacred Heart. But if the smell of gunpowder is absent, it is more than made up for with passion that can give way to unequalled ferocity. For the North Kerry hurler does not hold a hurley, he brandishes it. If the Pikeman in Tralee were conducting a rebellion in the heart of hurling parishes of North Kerry it would not be a pike but a hurley he would be displaying. One can imagine, if he were any ancestor to the present denizens of North Kerry, he and his likes would defeat even the mightiest of the King's battalions driving not bayonets or any such metal implement through the hearts of the enemy – but hurleys fashioned from the ashes that adorn North Kerry; but I would suspect there would be less driving and more smashing. It is not well known amongst Town folk that it is common practice for hurlers masquerading as footballers to smuggle hurleys onto the field of play to settle scores more generally of the romantic rather than the sporting kind. As a former referee, this matter was brought to my attention by a young gentleman who sought to leave the field of play as I was about to throw in the ball. He had been alerted by the imprint to a lover's lips on the boss of his rival's hurley as a warning to run for his life lest her lips were replaced by his brains.

Hurling shares a white ball with its sporting cousin. This observer, having studied the way hurling is played in North Kerry, has finally discovered why the sliotar in the average hurling encounter in local fields possesses a dazzling white more scintillating than any of its relations in other counties where hurling is widely practised. Like most questions which present with complexity, the solution is normally found in simplicity. The truth of the matter is that these sliotars are hit with such ferocity that they become white hot allowing every supporter the opportunity to observe at least one star on each occasion of a hurling encounter.

To add to the party occasion of a North Kerry hurling encounter, practically all living intelligent beings attend the foray. Among the most conspicuous in attendance are the local crow family who, often numbering in their hundreds, descend on the field after each match to collect the spoils. Blisters, bunions, scabs and sputem are among the largesse for gathering. I remember the glee of a crow who had a more than a small particle of a hurley in his mouth dragging it down the field despite of the attentions of his envious companions. It was as though he had finally won the Holy Grail – a hurler's femur. I often wonder where that crow landed with that hurley and am often awoken at night wondering, in moments of terror, where the remainder of that hurley now rests.

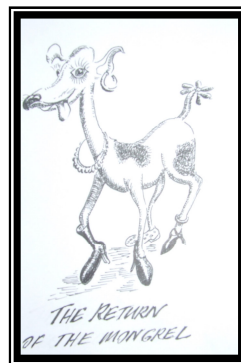
However returning to the art itself I would suggest its extension in the form of a compromise rules between the man's game of hurling and the gentleman's game of golf. This could be effected now with the use of hurleys and the golf ball. A word of warning which is



spoken from experience: the golfball will turn from a titanium projectile into a minuteman missile and is likely to land in the far end of the neighbouring parish which should be prepared for maximum devastation.

## FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE

'When sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions.' So said Claudius who was enduring not inconsiderable grief in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Claudius had the consolation however that he was fictional; but the same cannot be said for George W. Bush who, although it beggars belief, was not just the biggest star in his own 8 year long TV movie but really existed. Since GWB came to power unemployment has risen from 4.2% to the current 7.4%, his Iraq soiree has left 4,152 US military personnel dead and 30,182 injured. 911 happened during his watch as did Hurricane Katrina. The list of disasters goes on and now a Depression is taking a grip of the world economy. Just about everything apart from a nuclear war happened during the unfortunate Mr. Bush's reign. Now we have Barack Obama. He has infinite promise and but promises in a measured way. Central to Obama message is hope. This is an ideal prescription. As Mr. Shakespeare commented in *Measure for Measure*: "The miserable have no other medicine but only hope".



## THE RETURN OF THE MONGREL

It is an ill wind that doesn't blow someone some good, so the saying goes. Readers may well have noticed that the mongrel is reclaiming the streets of Tralee. His extinction was virtually assured in the recent times of boom when

householders introduced the non-townie pedigree in abundance to the horror of the local mongrel populace. The latter were prevented from entertaining any romantic notions with this new breed of dog and any attempt to satisfy such desires, as any street dog would tell you, was done so with the prospect of summary deportation to the local pound or Banna Beach or death or worse still banishment to the strange land beyond the walls of the town. The few mongrels this observer witnessed traversing the streets during the times of boom had the look of strangers in their own town and would bring to mind Alexander Pope's intimation 'this long disease, my life'.

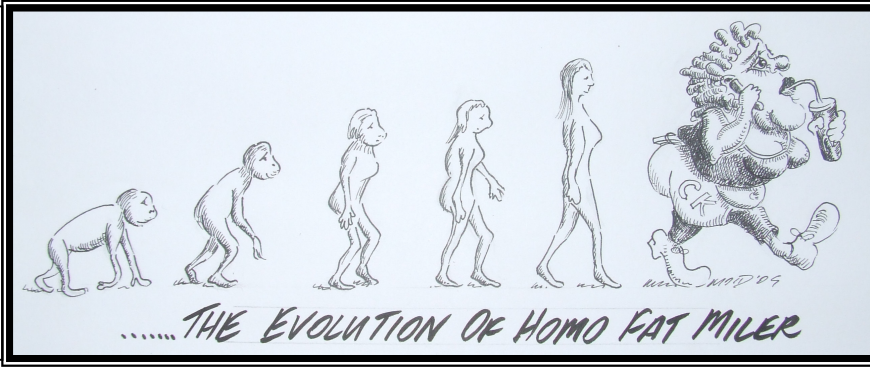
Now that boom has turned to inglorious doom, the mongrel returns as being common canine currency. Pedigrees are on the wane as quickly as they were on the wax in the late 1990's. There is no room now for china in the pet culture nowadays. After all they require regular servicing by local vets which is no inexpensive exercise, being subject as they are to the mildest of ailments that the mongrel wears lightly. A neighbour of mine was so upset at the death of her pedigree from some ailment of one form or another that it was as though the animal had died more than once. When I enquired of her how he was on the day of the unfortunate animal's major surgery, she declared that he was not dead, but was not alive either which certainly moved me into philosophical mode for a moment or two. On the other hand a good mongrel never gets sick being of robust lineage. To get sick would be an admission of relation to a pedigree – an abominable profanity to the mongrel way of thinking.

So as we enter into the deepest depression in the life of this nation, we can be relieved that the mongrel is on his way back.

## THE PUT-DOWN-TRALEE STYLE

A friend of mine related sometime ago, how having recovered from the excesses of a night out with some friends, he masqueraded as a gentleman the following evening when he walked into the middle of Tralee for a cure hand in hand with the fairer sex. All was going well, his body had more or less recovered, his stomach had spun its final spin, and his mind was now directed to his more domesticated romantic loyalties. As he approached to door of his wife's chosen pub, a member of the public – loosely associated with the said gentleman's escapades of the night before—called out. 'Hey Griffin, you're a different boy tonight!'. The evocation was uttered with such tremendous gentility, without the embellishment of a swear word, that its effect could only have been akin to that experienced by the Egyptian armies when God, through the hand of Moses, collapsed the walls of water to ensure their demise when safe passage through the Red Sea seemed certain. Overcome with deadening grief he somehow summoned his corpse and sufficient nerve to enter the premises. What happened next is anyone's guess. Suffice to say, that the unfortunate Griffin (I refer to him as Griffin and assure any Griffin reader that the subject of this article is not he) lived to tell the tale and was suitably warned by his companion that she could not live with such a conspicuous question mark remaining over his public person. She went on to recall for him the words of Bishop Moriarty of Kerry who warned the rebels of 1867 that 'hell was not hot enough, nor eternity long enough, to punish these miscreants'. Such a fate she would hold over her gentleman so long as he was in her company should he not invent a suitable way to redeem himself. He stands today as domesticated as a door-mat.

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**THE DEPRESSIONADOS**

A town without its characters is like the Town Park without its roses. In desperate times, truly desperate characters will emerge. These will test the wits and senses of all of us common Joes. They will put the second-hand car salesman in line for canonisation, the string-puller in knots, and threaten the loot of nits. Their stealth will surpass the most dextrous crochet aficionado. This new breed, which we will call for the moment Depressionados, will confound, mesmerise, obfuscate the ordinary devil and exploit any possible chink in the innocence of the common Tralee person much like Mikey Sheehy did in the 1982 Munster Final. Though a legion of Cork men stood in defence of the Cork gates, Sheehy with the consummate art of Wizard, punted to ball somehow into the back of the net. The Corkonians stood aghast bringing to mind General in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenin*. Anna had fallen out of love for the General and when she arrived unexpectedly at the races, he 'assumed the stolid immobility of death'. So stood the Cork men that Sunday afternoon – so immobilised that they made the Qin Terra Cotta Warriors of China look like jumping jiminies. Transfixed they were and as transfixed we will all be when the Desperados hold court in Tralee.

The Depressionado will be conspicuous for there normality of appearance – the average one will look just like the countless delinquents and illiterates that will emerge in the general populace. But they will present with neither vulgar of intellect. You will only realise you have encountered one when having shook a Despressionado's hand will you discover you are short a finger, or when you look look at the mirror you will notice you are short an eye, or when you chew your evening bone you will lack the incisionary capacity of one of your canines. In sum, your balance sheet will be in a mortal state of imbalance and you will have to seek the services of the comparatively benign loan shark. You will feel like Gareth Fitzgerald did when he opened the national accounts book in 1981.

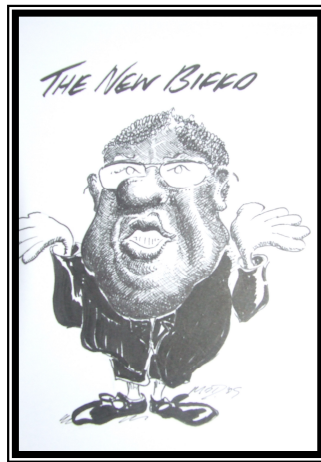
Malignant may be the disposition of the Depressionados but far from uneducated will they be. The will be scholars of human engagement having been reared in the goalmouth of opportunity. Where ever there is the remotest hint of advantage, waiting to pounce will be the Depressionado. Lest we strike fear into the common Traleeite, we can be assured that this new breed will be of our own stock and let us call to mind Mr. Shakespeare who reminds us in *Measure for Measure* that "some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall"

**THE ANONYMOUS ECONOMIST**

The economic crisis gripping this country has evolved very quickly from being a one that is strictly financial to a massive socio-political

powder-keg. It is no a crisis of confidence and trust in government and large institutions that form part of the apparatus of how society is organized. Where Ireland it is clear to everyone that there is no leadership in the country. This is disheartening for those who work very hard, rear their children as best they can and pay their taxes. It is tremendously difficult for workers all around the country and especially here in Tralee—which certainly has not benefited from the last economic boom— where hundreds of workers face job losses.

What is needed is honest, intelligent, positive political leadership. Of course it is easy to blame politicians but the plain truth is that we select and elect these people who for the most part are completely inept. This means we must produce renewed political leadership and promote our best, brightest and most positive leaders. If the USA can do so, so can we. Tinkering with the economic system in the meantime is like Nero fiddling while Rome burns.



**MEDICAL MATTERS: AMMANIA TUBOSIS**

A friend of mine, who has an apparent expertise on all matters medical, came to me recently having identified a new strain of illness. Its symptoms, he described, as being a constant obsession with the recession now free-falling as we all know into depression. His chief problem was the propounding of a word to describe it. For a Tralee man to be short of a suitable English word is normal given their propensity to express themselves through their sporting exploits on the football field or at the bookies. The matter taxed our collective mind for sometime. Words with a historical twist came to mind – which native readers will understand with some appreciation - such as Kingdom Tubosis and Klopmania, with more contemporary competitors entering the fray such as Ammania, Tralee Meatis and Dennicitis.

We settled the matter by referring to a local, enterprising taxi man who has had the idea of including a micro-course in economics for the price of a lift to any part of Tralee. Given the demand for economics lessons at the moment he rightly figured that he could charge for the lesson and give the lifts for free. The name he came up was an amalgam of our own suggestions, being a mixture of the new and the old and so he proffered *Ammania Tubosis*. This ailment is an aggressive one transmissible by sight, by sound even by the media. If you take note of the tracksuit wearers ratio in Tralee, you have *Ammania Tubosis*. If you speak of the horrors before us, you have *Ammania Tubosis*. If you read about it, you have *Ammania Tubosis*. Who of us are not victims?

**THE MAN FLU**

When the carer is more sick than the cared for, one can predict with almost perfect accuracy that the latter will be a man and the former a woman - perhaps an unfortunate nurse in casualty, nursing a mockery of a male who has been unable to find pity at home. 'I'm dying! 'Tis worse than having a baby is my chest!' he will declare with a cry and he will cough with one that is summoned from the depths of his bowels and stuns nearby expectant mothers into epidural silence should they be so naive. His body and his temperament will imitate *rigor mortis* to get attention from the female hand. And so the dying nurse the ill. It reminds me of government coffers giving succour to Anglo-Irish Bank.

It is funny how nature has a habit of reversing what would seem to be the natural order of things. I thought I had seen it all until a neighbour of mine, owner of countless felines, related that a certain male cat in his possession has the best of many worlds. Not only is he the possessor of nine lives, but is also the proud father of his mother's new family of kittens and partakes in public showings of affection for her by suckling from her at his front-door like an infant would a bottle. If this did not shake me to the foundations of my affections for nature, he also related that the said kittens had recently disappeared and the father is widely suspected of patricide and their possible digestion – an event which he believes will become more common during these times of depression when misery will afflict the lives of even the most innocent of tom cats as he competes with the mongrel for lean spoils.

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The Tralee Whistleblower wishes to thank readers for their compliments. Among the words used to describe this publication were:

**'what a rag!'**, **'hilarious'**, **'too big!'**

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