

Return of talking lamp-posts in Ferrybank

It is interesting that 'talking lamp-posts' are to be tried out in Ferrybank in an effort to encourage dog owners to pick up and bin their animal's excrement.

The idea is that a recording in the lamp-post will remind people of their civic duty.

Mind you, over 50 years ago there were several 'singing lamp-posts' in the Upper Ferrybank area much to the annoyance of some local residents.

We were the first generation to have access to small transistor radios and we thought we were really cool even more so than today's youngsters with their smartphones and iPads.

The trouble was, the only stations to broadcast pop music were Radio Luxemburg and the pirate Radio Caroline and, even at night, the reception was often poor until we found a solution.

By standing on somebody's shoulders, we could hammer a nail into the big, wooden ESB posts and hang our radios up there. The poles became huge aerials and soon our little radios were 'singing' loud and clear with all the newest sounds.

On warm, summer nights we gathered beneath and were introduced to magical sounds from the US and Britain thanks to a radio station in a tiny country in the middle of mainland Europe and a small ship bouncing about the waves outside British territorial waters. We felt like explorers discovering new frontiers and, to some extent, we were.

A bit of a stink with Bertie and George

The then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern was visiting President George Bush in Washington on Saint Patrick's Day and it was arranged that, after the Taoiseach had presented the President with a shamrock filled Waterford Crystal bowl, they would travel the short distance together to a reception at the Irish Embassy.

President Bush said: "Mr Bertie, Sir, you have been Prime Minister of Ireland for a long time and you are soon to address both our houses of elected representatives so, in your honour, I have ordered that we will travel to your embassy in an open-topped, horse drawn carriage with full ceremonial honours."

Bertie thanked George profusely and, as a military band played The Irish Washerwoman, they walked together across a red carpet on the White House lawn to where an open, 17th century coach, hitched to six, magnificent, white horses was waiting.

As they travelled towards the embassy there were thousands of tourists lining the streets and they clapped and waved as the carriage went past.

Indeed, many spectators were waving Irish tricolours that an advance party of White House staff had handed out minutes earlier.

Everything was going swimmingly well until, suddenly, the right rear horse emitted the most horrendous, earth-rending, eye-smarting blast of gastronomic flatulence ever heard. It was a big, big fart.

Hardly able to draw a breath in the contaminated atmosphere, George blushed and said: "My good friend, Mr Bertie, Sir, please accept my apologies but I'm sure you understand that there are some things that even a President cannot control."

"Yerrah, will you go away out of that and don't be worried," said Bertie, giving George a friendly dig on the arm. "Don't give it a second thought. Anyway, if you hadn't mentioned it I would have thought it was one of the horses."

A long way from here to penny candles

We live in an amazing age of technology folks and, if the Pope can twitter, then why shouldn't people be able to light a candle at Knock Shrine on-line as well?

That is exactly what is happening and, from last week on, believers can order a virtual candle from any place in the world for just €2.50.

One large, real candle will burn at the Shrine in County Mayo every day symbolising all the virtual candles purchased.

Parish Priest, Fr Richard Gibbons, said virtual candles were proving very popular and, while there was some home support from around the country, most of the purchasers were living in the United States, Canada and Australia.

There is also a facility whereby petitions can be made on-line and the actual printed words are placed on the altar every day during Mass.

Some people will scoff at such practices but many more are very sincere in their beliefs and, perhaps, there is an opening there for other churches as well.

I am sure many Waterfordians in far away places would welcome an opportunity to light a candle in Ballybricken Church or St Mary's, Ballygunner on occasions that are special to them and their families. It would be a comfort to them and provide funds for the parishes in question. As our friends at Tesco are fond of saying: 'Every little helps'!

Incidentally, the Knock Marriage Bureau is still going strong and, last year, it generated five marriages, five engagements and 20 couples in steady relationships. During the year, the Bureau received 370 written enquiries and 1,500 telephone calls.

Got to give up those pesky blurred lines!

There was an interesting legal spat in the courts last week when the estate of the late singer, Marvin Gaye, won a large cash settlement against recording stars Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams.

A jury found that the pair had copied the Motown's singer's hit, 'Got To Give It Up', in the creation of their own hit single, 'Blurred Lines'.

Mind you, plagiarism cases are more common than you might think but a lot of them are quietly settled out of court.

One of the most famous cases concerned Beatle George Harrison's big hit, 'My Sweet Lord', in 1976. The publishers of 'He's So Fine', a hit for The Chiffons in 1962, claimed Harrison's song was a copy of their hit and sued.

In the end, a court found that 'My Sweet Lord' was an 'unconscious' copy of 'He's So Fine' but, by that time, George Harrison had purchased the copyright of The Chiffons song so he ended up owning them both!

If my memory serves me well, I seem to recall that Irish pianist and composer, Phil Coulter (who has a PhD in music) was an expert witness in a number of high profile cases in various parts of the world.