

# Straight talking



with 'The Duke'

seamus@roscommonpeople.ie

## Remembering Rory

As I write this column I am listening to the plans in Ballyshannon to unveil a statue to Rory Gallagher in the town this evening (Wednesday).

The first live rock concert that I was ever at was Rory Gallagher in The Carlton Cinema in Dublin. Not today or yesterday I can tell you! He was a truly

brilliant musician and over the following years I went to see him perform live many times. I also remember going to see him at a festival in Macroom in Cork and to other gigs around the country. He was probably the first Irish rock superstar and I am glad that he is being remembered by the people of Ballyshannon where he was born.

He spent most of his life in Cork but the Donegal people claim him too. The news brings backs very fond memories indeed

## Charity event

I know that there are several very worthwhile charity events being held over this bank holiday weekend but one that I have been asked to draw your attention to is a fundraising barbecue in aid of Crumlin Children's Hospital which is being held at Paddy Finn's Kiltewan on Bank Holiday Sunday, 6th June between 5 pm and 7 pm. It should be a bit of craic and it's supporting a very good cause.

## Turf talk

The turf-cutting ban is now officially in place and while there has been an ongoing campaign against the proposals in recent years it will only be next year when we see what will happen with regard to those who are affected.

In the national papers this week a list of the bogs affected by the ban are published. However most of the turf for this year is already cut and the ban will not have much of an effect.

My information is that several people are fully intent on defying the ban and going ahead with turf cutting next year. However we shall have to wait and see what happens in that regard.

## Take care

This weekend many people will be on the move for the June bank holiday weekend and unfortunately there are always several serious accidents and drownings when it comes to these weekends, especially if the weather is good.

In the last few weeks, people have crowded to the seaside and to the various beauty spots around the county to enjoy the water and the good weather. People should take extra care especially with children in water. People on boats should take every precaution that they can to prevent tragedy. We have had so many tragedies in the county this year, the last thing we want is any more this weekend.

## Tough decisions for the UK

Coming home in the car on Sunday night I listened with interest to a debate on BBC radio about the government plans in the UK to cut spending in the public service over the next twelve months and what is being predicted is pretty frightening.

They have not suffered nearly as badly from the recession as we have here, but they still have got to cut their public spending to get their finances in order. The predictions are that 50,000 public servants will lose their jobs before the end of 2011 and

the job losses could be as high as 100,000.

Apparently the new government in the UK are determined to press ahead with these plans.

Whether the unions will allow this to happen is another thing entirely, but the scale of what is

planned is massive. It will be a huge test of the coalition government's resolve surely.

The reason I mention that is that we have had a far more severe downturn here and what a lot of people in this country here do not understand is that we

have to find at least three billion euro in savings again this year and another three billion next year again before our finances are going to be stabilised. I just wonder have we the stomach for it.

We have taken enough already.

## O'Leary's loot



Now why didn't I buy Ryanair shares? This week the company announced that they were handing out 500 million Euro to shareholders because it had no use for the money!

Needless to say the biggest single beneficiary will be CEO of the company Michael O'Leary, left, who will take 40 million Euro from this transaction alone. Nice work if you can get it!

## Motorways making travel safer

One thing that we can be proud of as a result of the so-called Celtic Tiger is the motorway network around the country. Last week the last section of the Dublin to Cork motorway was completed and it will reduce the journey time between those two cities by 45 minutes, but far more importantly it will reduce the death toll on the road too.

Here in this part of the country we have enjoyed the new motorway from Athlone to Dublin over the past year or so and it is a fantastic addition to the infrastructure of the region. The journey time from Roscommon to Dublin is now well below two hours and if the road is quiet then it is down to not much more than an hour and a half. I know that the Greens are against the building of motorways but they are much safer to drive on and anything that saves lives is very welcome indeed.

I also read this week where the Government is to roll out the new speed cameras before the end of the year. I hope that the cameras are placed where they are likely to save lives and not to make money for the exchequer. There is no point shooting fish in a barrel when there are dangerous roads where the cameras will actually serve a purpose other than collecting money.



Roscommon Rose of Tralee Deirdre Lenahan with Larry Brennan and her cousin Tony McManus in Portlaoise. Pic: www.hursonphotography.com.

## Good luck, Deirdre

Best of luck to Roscommon Rose Deirdre Lenahan in next weekend's Rose selection competition in Portlaoise.

We also wish the best of luck to another Roscommon girl Aine Shine who will also be in Portlaoise after winning the Liverpool

selection competition. Roisín Hunt also from Roscommon is through to Tralee already having won through in San Francisco.

Wouldn't be great craic to have three Roscommon girls in the final!

## Dangerous developments in the Middle East

I am in no way an expert on what goes in the Middle East but the attack this week by the Israeli's on the ships carrying aid to Gaza has caused a major international incident and is a very dangerous development.

Regardless of the wrongs and rights of what the Israelis did, it has drawn attention to the situation with regard to the 1.5 million people who are effectively being held in an open prison on the Gaza Strip and who are short of food, medical supplies, school books, medicines etc. The Israelis have been well known to strike first at all stages if they feel that there is even the slightest threat to their nation, but this week they have annoyed almost the entire international community. It is a dangerous escalation of an already fraught situation and let's hope that a solution can be found to this problem.

Even if that happens, the wider problem with regard to the Gaza Strip exists. I have to say also that I have been impressed with the performance of Brian Cowen and Michael Martin since the crisis broke. We all know that Ireland is not a major player in the international scene, but they acted quickly in calling in the Israeli ambassador to demand an explanation and they warned Israel to free the Irish detainees. Usually Irish politicians are afraid to open their mouths on these issues so credit where it's due.