

YES, PRIME MINISTER

Carmel Foran

"Satiric scenes are decorated with trees, caverns, mountains and other rustic objects delineated in landscape style" wrote Vitruvius in 27 BC.

MY STORY contains all the above elements and yes it is satirical but not farce as it actually happened.

Edward Donoghue was a proud happy man as he drank his morning coffee on the deck of his boat moored at Lusty Beg. To coincide with the opening of the Ballinamore/Ballyconnell canal he had built a fabulous 6 berth cruiser in his workshop. Donoghue had grown up on the banks of the defunct canal and every election time heard various politicians declare that they would bring it back to its former glory. He never believed it but thanks to German money it became a reality in the early 90's.

Donoghue felt he should do something spectacular to honour the event so he hired the best brains in the boat manufacturing industry and the task was completed in 6 months. It was far more than a boat, it was a fully-fledged luxury cruiser.

The summer of 1997 turned out to be what is a rare phenomenon - a very warm sunny one. Donoghue and his wife Anne traversed the mighty Shannon from their base in Leitrim all the way to Ardnacrusha and back spending weeks on end exploring it's lakes, islands and wildlife. That summer they joined the 'boat people' - a species all to themselves and uniquely different to their fellow mortals.

The slow pace of travel on the waterways mellowed people. Donoghue concluded that the river brought out the best in

people. They had shared many drinks, barbecues and genuinely pleasant moments with their fellow travellers - memories they would treasure for many years.

Now at Lusty Beg they were on the last leg, and when they sailed into Beleek they had completed the waterway. On the last leg of their journey they had been joined by their two daughters Maire and Grace. On mooring in Beleek Anne and Maire were tasked with cleaning the boat. Edward and Grace said they'd make a 'contribution' to the task by bringing the rubbish to the bins. Two hours later they hadn't returned and Anne was furious: "The Devil has met someone he knows and gone to the pub" she seethed. But Maire pointed out that it was too early in the day and that Grace was a minor. That never stopped him before, a neighbour once said Donoghue would bring a newborn baby to the pub if the notion of a drink took him.

Anne decided to investigate but on nearing the bin area of the marina, she was told sternly by an RUC officer to get back to the boat. Another hour passed and still no sign of the intrepid duo. A British army helicopter swooped low near the boat but Anne and Maire took no notice as this was still troubled times in Northern Ireland.

Eventually the pair returned and Anne could swear she saw the effects of drink on her husband but she couldn't have been farther from the truth. They told the story of what happened.

As they arrived to the refuse area to dump the bags, Grace opened the bin and screamed hysterically: "Daddy, Daddy there's a body in the bin". Donoghue, not feeling too brave that day, took a gingerly peep and sure enough a man's head with two eyes were staring out at him.

Momentarily panicked he remembered what he was told growing up : Call the Gardai. But this was Northern Ireland and a time when very few people had a mobile phone so they ran to the RUC barracks in Beleek and blurted out the story to the attending officer. The man didn't look too perplexed as this was a frequent scenario during the troubles. He called his superior officer and they both listened again to Donoghue's tale. They made a call and within minutes the mighty power of the British army swung into action.

Four army tenders arrived each carrying 10 soldiers and the Donoghues were put in a police car to point out the location of the body. As they neared the scene, the soldiers jumped from the wagon and lay prostrate on the ground with their rifles cocked. A helicopter droned overhead and the RUC cordoned off the area.

The commanding officer walked gingerly to the bin as bodies were often boobie-trapped to cause destruction to the first responders. After what seemed like an age he slowly lifted the lid and poked the body with a long stick. He immediately started to laugh. Donoghue was angry. He knew soldiers were battle hardened, but to laugh at a dead man's demise was a bridge too far. The commander walked over the RUC sergeant and the two of them laughed. Donoghue was furious. They gave the command for the soldiers to stand down the operation.

Still laughing, he walked to Donoghue's police car. "Mr Donoghue, thank you for reporting this incident to us. We are truly grateful but you know very little about politics". The 'body' in the bin is an effigy of our newly elected Prime Minister - Tony Blair!"