

# Friends through Drink MICK GEELAN

**The Cliffoney Dramatic Society** had been invited over to Luton to do our version of 'The Wake in The West' at the St Patrick's weekend festival. This was to be a fundraiser for The Luton Irish Forum, which is a great little organisation that supports all things Irish in Luton. It's assistance ranges from crèche facilities for toddlers to Irish dancing classes for older children, social evenings for older people, right through to trying to pick up those unfortunates who have fallen through the cracks.

On the final night, Sean McSharry and I, who were traveling with the set, came down the stairs and out of The Luton Library Theatre with a mind to get the van turned and packed so we could drive the whole thing back to Sligo. Outside on the steps of the library was a bunch of winos: a wee fellow; a fat fellow; a beanpole; and a girl.

The theatre happens to be on level four of Luton Library, so transporting the complete set down three flights of stairs after the show is no easy task. It was a matter of "all hands on deck", to have it dismantled in an orderly fashion, while also ensuring the props were securely packed away safely. As the driver, I surely didn't want the whole shebang to be dancing around the

back of the van on the way back to Sligo. The crew worked quickly and efficiently — I imagine the thought of the Luton pubs being closed before all had a few celebratory drinks was the real motivator..

Now it's a grand thing to be off doing a fundraiser to help the homeless but a slightly different proposition when suddenly confronted by a bunch of them sharing a bottle, so, I got out of the front of the van to open the back of the van and I eyed up the small group as they were eyeing me up and all the time I was trying to avoid making eye contact.

I failed. The wee fellow on the end locked in and he approached. His accent had never left the west of Ireland. "You're a Dub," he said and I said no I am from Leitrim and he said "the van has a dub reg" and I said "it's hired" and he said "have you 50p" and I gave him a pound.

The beanpole then approached and he said "I am Polski from Poland" and the wee fellow said "eff off, Jack" and he did. Then I asked the wee man his name and he turned his head sideways and looked at me quizzically for a minute, like as if I was a policeman, and he said, "I am from Ballinasloe in the County Galway. Do you know where that is?"

and I said it's in County Galway and he said, "that's right how did you know that". I said "I was always good at geography".

Then Polski Jack came back with the bottle and he said, "Do you want a drink, Jimmy?" and while Jimmy was drinking Jack tapped me up for another pound.

Then the crowd came out and hot on their heels, chairs, and tables and pictures and flats came down the stairs in a hurry and the van was very quickly packed as Polsky Jack was doing a waltz around the street to whatever music was in his head and using one of our chairs as his dancing partner.

While all this was going on the fat man and the girl were working the crowd and making the odd score here and there.

It was snowing when we left the theatre and headed for the pub, and when Sean and myself were pulling out of Luton at 4 am the next morning, there was three inches of snow on the ground, but all I could think of as I drove our nice warm van slowly and carefully up the M1 towards Holyhead, was the fat man and the girl, Polski Jack, and wee Jimmy from Ballinasloe.

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## Leitrim's First Olympic Medal!

The honour of winning Leitrim's first ever Olympic medal was claimed by Glenade's Déarbhla Rooney in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Wednesday, October 17, 2018, when she had a clear cut victory over New Zealand's Te Shelford-Edmonds in their fight for the Women's Youth Olympic featherweight bronze medal. Déarbhla received a heroine's welcome on her return, first during a stop-off at the new Glencar/Manor GAA pitch at Boggaun and afterwards in the Bee Park Community Centre. Irish Amateur Athletic Boxing Association Vice-President, Joe Hennigan presented

special framed certificates to mark the achievements of Déarbhla and Sligo's Dean Clancy, who narrowly missed out on a medal at the Youth Olympics but who like Déarbhla earlier this year claimed a European boxing silver medal, and was also honoured during Sunday's evening's welcome home Manorhamilton celebrations for Ms. Rooney. He believes that Déarbhla and Dean will box for Ireland at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.



Déarbhla Rooney  
Photos courtesy of PJ Leddy



Déarbhla is pictured in the National Stadium on Friday night, January 26 after she defeated Ellie Preston, Baldoyle Boxing Club Dublin in the Irish 57 kg U18 fight final.