

DAMIEN'S DIARY

It's probably best that Bertie stays in the press

As I sat down in front of the television last Friday evening to watch the *Six One News*, an unusual ad appeared for a Sunday newspaper.

I immediately thought "Joe Duffy will be busy on Monday". It was that now-infamous ad involving our former Taoiseach.

A sleepy young man walks into his kitchen and opens a press only to find Bertie Ahern – who writes for the paper advertised – crouched in behind the biscuits.

I had been wondering where Bertie had been all week, while poor Brian Cowen was trying to add up all the noughts in €50bn.

But you know what, it's probably best that Bertie stays in the press

for another while. That's because it would be easier to find an Orange-man singing to the tune of *Sean South of Garryowen* than find anyone who has a good word to say about Bertie these days.

Now I have a wee bit of a problem with that. And here's why. We are all entitled to be extremely angry at those who brought us into the hell hole we are now in but, when it comes to Bertie, we should stop and remember that Bertie Ahern didn't elect himself.

He was elected democratically by us, the people of Ireland, not once, not twice but three times. We decided that Bertie – the GAA man, and Manchester United fanatic – had many good qualities, was better than John Bruton, Michael Noonan

and Enda Kenny in that order, to lead our country.

To be fair, most people voted in good faith. But there were others to whom there was simply no talking to when it came to asking any questions about Bertie and the boom. There was no one like Bertie.

That's all in the past, and it's obvious that many of his once-loyal fans have turned on him. And while we have justifiable questions to ask of him, we should also ask why, exactly, people did vote for him as recently as three years ago, even when there were questions over his personal finances?

Here's one suggestion. Despite the warnings about the property bubble and the money he won on the horses, would it have had

anything to do with the fact that everyone was working and there was lots of money sloshing around? We were living in a false economy, but Bertie worked off the mantra "let's keep her going, Patsy" and the electorate gladly obliged. The irony of it all.

So next time someone goes off about Bertie, ask the question: if he was so incompetent, how did he manage to win three general elections in a row? Chances are, those same people played a big part in that when they wouldn't hear a wrong word said of him or Fianna Fáil.

People are more annoyed at the fact that he blames the Yanks for the mess, rather than accepting any responsibility himself. So let's hope,

for his sake, that Jay Leno doesn't find out where he is hiding out these days. In a press in a kitchen in a house that's probably in negative equity. **CL**



Damien O'Reilly

Catch *Countrywide* with Damien O'Reilly, RTE Radio 1, on Saturday mornings at 8.10am.

email backchat@irishcountryliving.ie. with your rant

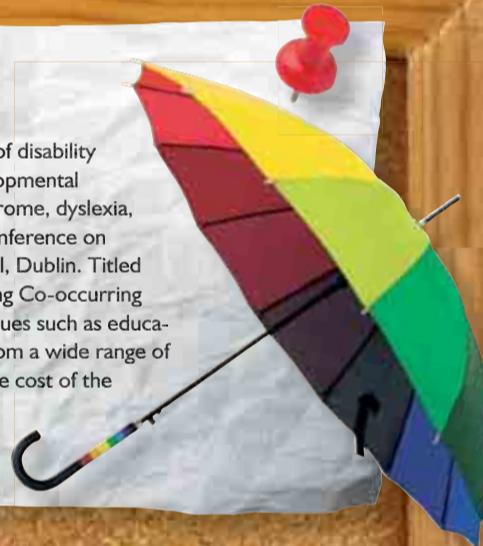
ALL BUTTONED UP

Looking for something different to do in your free time? If you live in the vicinity of Bray, you may be interested in classes being run by Laura Thorp in the authentic Victorian method of corset making. An avid seamstress, Laura recreates historical clothing using original techniques and materials. Corsets were used to create a desired shape in times past – you can use your tailored version for the same purpose now! Two-hour classes that run over 10 weeks are priced at €285, and this includes all materials for a standard corset. Participants are limited to six to ensure individual attention. To book, call Laura on 087-994-8591.



RAISING AWARENESS OF HIDDEN DISABILITIES

Spectrum Alliance – the umbrella network of disability groups working for those affected by developmental disorders including autism, Asperger's syndrome, dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD – will host a major conference on Saturday, 16 October at the Red Cow Hotel, Dublin. Titled "Common Themes – Strategies for Managing Co-occurring Conditions", the conference will address issues such as education and occupational therapy, with input from a wide range of expert speakers, including Fergus Finlay. The cost of the conference is €70, which includes a packed lunch and refreshments. For further information, visit www.spectrumalliance.ie.



WE HAD HER FIRST

Congratulations to Iseult Janssens of The Cake Stand (right), who was named Best Artisan Producer at the Blas na hÉireann Irish Food Awards in Dingle at the weekend. Regular readers will remember that Iseult, from Newcastle in Co Dublin, appeared in our young women in business series during the summer talking about her scrumptious macaroons, cupcakes and patisserie style treats. Other Blas na hÉireann winners included Valentia Island Farmhouse Dairy (Best Kerry Producer), The Blue Haven Food Company (AIB Diversification Award) and Dungarvan Brewing Company (Best New Producer). For further information, visit www.dinglefood.com or www.irishfoodawards.com.



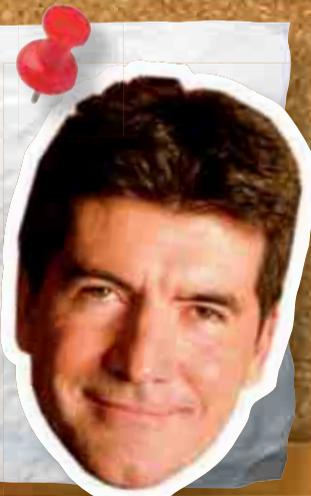
IT'S CHILD'S PLAY

Primary schools across the country are invited to register for Ireland's annual School Game Playing Day on Friday, 22 October. Schools are asked to allow children to bring €2, along with their favourite board games to play during class on the last day of school term. The funds raised can be used by the school itself or donated to a charity of their choice. Waterford-based toy and game manufacturer Hasbro has pledged six top MB and Parker board games free for every school that gets involved. Find out more at www.ngpw.ie or call 01-661-3533.



X-FACTOR MACRA STYLE

If you're glued to *X-Factor* every Saturday night – and secretly think you could do a lot better than half the people they put through – now is your chance to do your best Simon Cowell impression (high-waisted trousers optional) at Macravision. Hosted by Limerick Macra na Feirme, this *Stars in their Eyes*-style karaoke competition takes place this Saturday, 9 October at the Kilmurry Lodge Hotel in Castletroy at 8pm. Prizes on the night include best individual, best group and best-dressed act, with a disco to follow. And who knows, you might just spot the next Leona Lewis.



REMEMBERING SUSIE LONG

The legacy of a courageous health campaigner will be remembered in Kilkenny during Susie Long Hospice Week, which runs from 11-17 October. The mother-of-two, who died from bowel cancer in October 2007, first raised public awareness about the two-tier health service during her battle with the disease. Events planned include a film night, live music session and alternative disco, and all money raised will go towards the Susie Long Hospice Fund, which aims to establish a 10-bed hospice to provide quality end-of-life care in the county. For further information, visit www.susielonghospice.com. Donations can also be made directly to the fund at AIB, High St, Kilkenny, Account no: 3462705, Sort code: 93-31-98.

