

Lavatory
Homework
Achill Writers Group
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In 2009 the ancient scullery in the house of the Polranny Pirates was demolished and replaced with a much larger combination box room, utility room and shower room with lavatory.

The whole operation caused the original water supply to be rearranged too.

The water that filled the flush tank of the upstairs loo didn't come from the water tank anymore, but instead came straight from the mains.

A worrying phenomenon developed after the building was finished. The upstairs lavatory started to speak up. At first it let itself be heard occasionally. But after about a year it started to hoot loudly after flushing; as if blowing the Last Post. This jazzy sound initially came and went.

We got the plumber in to look at it. He immediately concluded that the rubber of the ball cock had deteriorated and he changed it. We looked on while he flushed. The tank filled up and when the filling slowly stopped silence fell. What a relief! But not for long.

Soon the lavatory trumpet started to blow again. Over the years the hooting got worse. It now sounded like the horn of a mammoth tanker leaving port. You could even hear it outside in the garden. It also seemed to lengthen in duration. It was a major embarrassment. We left notes warning unsuspecting guests not to flush when people were asleep. The sudden ear piercing sound might cause a heart attack.

Over the years all the Polranny Pirates developed theories about the how and why of the sound and how the problem could be solved. One thing we were sure of: it was some sort of resonance. One could actually feel the copper water pipes vibrate. If only we could stop the vibrating we were sure the horn like blast would disappear. One Polranny Pirate in particular made it a quest to find a way to stop the hooting. When in Polranny he would spend hours in deep thought sitting on a chair next to the offending lavatory. Every now and then he would jump up and try out something new: to no avail.

I had my own rather apocalyptic thoughts about the subject. According to me the bathtub was slowly sinking through the floor. On its way down it put forever more pressure on the pipes that connected the cold water tap of the bath and the loo causing the resonance. One day in the near future when somebody took a bath the whole structure, bath and everything else would come crashing through the kitchen ceiling. My answer to solving the problem was to do away with the bath. However the Polranny Pirates vetoed my brilliant suggestion.

Peter Mertens one of the visiting artists even wrote a poem about our embarrassment calling it The Basset Horn of Polranny Pirates. How were we going to live this down?

But believe it or not almost 10 years after the very first hoot a visitor, came, saw, went to Sweeney's hardware, turned the place upside down till he had found what he was looking for, installed it in the flush tank of the lavatory and the Basset Horn blew no more. Well, afterwards he confessed he had Asperger's Syndrome as if that in itself had been the solution. At least it took some of the shame away that the combined brainpower of the Polranny Pirates had never thought of replacing the ball cock.