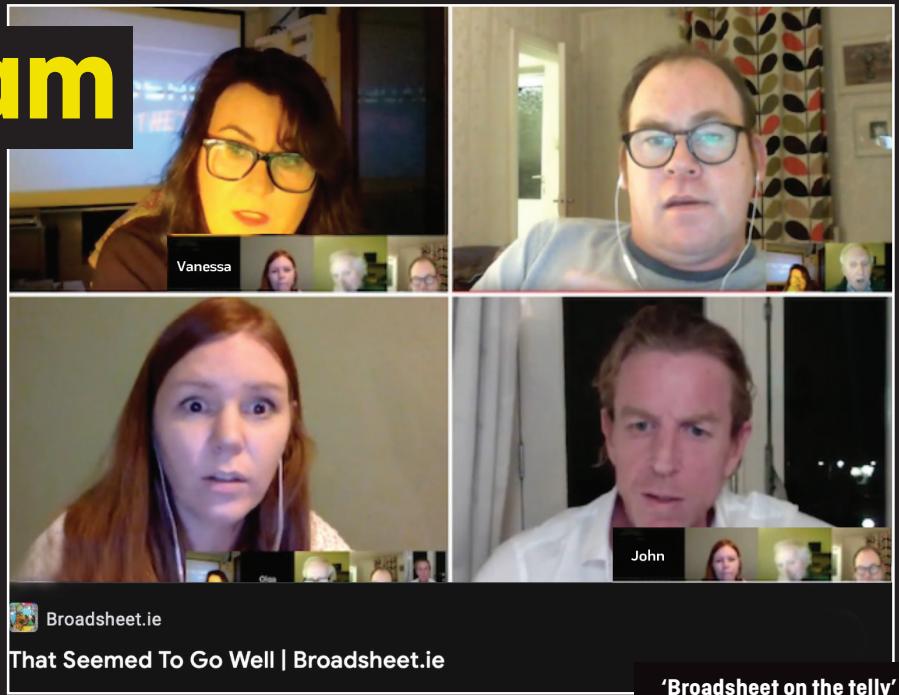


In memoriam Bodger

Broadsheet.ie and its talented editor never changed though the world got woker



**By Vanessa Foran
aka Frilly Keane**

SINCE I am the *Village* local with the most words sunk on the departed Broadsheet.ie it comes to me to say a few words.

There is only one name that comes with Broadsheet now, and that is its founder, its shaper, and its last man standing, John Ryan Junior. He needs no introduction to Irish media; most know him longer than I do, and much of it in better days and younger times. Of pretty parties and cat walks.

All that is no loss to me.

John Ryan held my words in his hands as a master craftsman of the published word.

But there is also scar tissue. Not only did we each maintain two separate Broadsheet parts, we were stuck together between all of them in different combinations, and across different themes and streams.

Plus, we were both high-functioning divas

I have come to recognise that it was never the anonymity the nom de plume *Frilly Keane* looked like it gave me that made it all work; it was the freedom to use words whatever way I wanted. I got to break every rule of language and its written word. I had John Ryan on my side, so I could do anything with a word and make words do all sorts of things. Until I didn't anymore.

Then I had to rely on the nine-to-five-land side of the *Celebrity Accountant Vanessa Off the Telly* that John Ryan concocted.

Of all the talents recorded in the messages of condolence the Broadsheet shutdown provoked, none mention John Ryan's ability to convince by leaving no trace of his tactics behind.

His greatest work to date, Broadsheet.ie, put us together. I was a part of it, for better and for worse. John Ryan enabled the anonymous bawdy uncut Frilly to strut all over his home because he knew how to make that productive for him. He even rolled up his sleeves for some corner-boy big-talk himself; "Fight!" Which all fused to generate the forum he built and curated for a few of its better seasons. Ploughing Championships.

When it ended, it was him I missed. Not the writing, not the escapades and skirmishes of the *Frilly Keane* comment sections, or the *Celebrity Accountant Vanessa off the Telly* lark. It was my writing partnership and rapport with John Ryan.

I have seen many of the different diagnoses and conflicting 'post-mortems' of Broadsheet.ie. Most are all fulla-shyte; a technical term I am qualified to use. Posts of condescending guff that read like hummed condolences. And from fulltime writers and media-overified whatnots. Maybe fate had a good reason that I shouldn't hide under a name of convenience anymore since I'm calling out the mainstream floaters they are if 15-year-old photographs and spiel is all they've got to resource their columns and comments.

On a day-to-day level, Broadsheet needed two essential components, Content and Comments.

When the former tacked more to the All Right Freedom hit makers, it was a natural consequence that that political bias would seek out that tailwind. Over time Broadsheet only became relevant to that cohort of com-

menters. And commenters drive traffic.

It was no longer a forum of playful all-sorts that could click you from a breaking news thread to a culture-riff, to the anticipation of what might be under a *Meanwhile in*. It was no longer bringing out the lols for lurkers. Its big reads got too frequent and seemed determined to be as divisive as possible.

Its band of updated content got too narrow and before long it was firmly identified as Anti Vax Conspiracy Hooked Rapture waiting Absurds. Its daily meeting point – the papers, became an insurrection of the above Absurds.

One time, long long on the internet ago, identity was your accent, your club, your county colours. They are what formed our handles and our avatars.

The internet widened, and then woke itself over Broadsheet's almost 12 years, thinning the original settlers out. Its comments sections overgrew its original content mission – to laugh at Preposterous.

We are all now boxed in by our selected identity and social media profiles. Your gender, your choice of pronoun, your sexuality, your diet, your healthcare choices and who you vote for. Were you a Johnny or an Amber?

One time, we early settlers just used a t-shirt or a few badges to tell the World who we were, and what we were for. Now everyone can align themselves more precisely to the finer points of different and unique.

Identity spectrums now provide classifications that give you the ability to define yourself exactly how you want. While allowing a formal recognition of the equal status of all, it also divides us more finely.

It was the Internet, that fifth estate, that changed. Not Broadsheet. And certainly not John Ryan. 