



BANISHING BANVILLE

POOR OLD **Jawn Banville** must be wondering what he did wrong when he found himself out in the cold earlier this month after the *Sunday Times* chose its “pick of the top British and Irish fiction of the past 25 years”.

Banville has, of course, been one of the truly dominant Irish novelists of recent decades, managing to attract critical acclaim and a high profile, eg courtesy of his 2005 Booker Prize-winning novel, *The Sea*. John Boy has also regularly cropped up on lists of the bookies’ favourite to pick up the all important Nobel Prize in Literature, which, indeed, he thought he had done in 2019, only to find it was a dreadfully cruel hoax – much to the amusement of his various detractors.

In more recent years, however, Banville’s name has failed to concern the bookmakers, while **Sebastian Barry**, for example, has been increasingly prominent. (He is currently ranking around 25/1 for the 2025 gong, with **Anne Carson**, **Haruki Murakami** and **Can Xue** among the runners and riders with the shortest odds.)

In the case of the ST, the “top British and Irish fiction” of the last quarter of a century was selected by the paper’s literary editor, **Robbie Millen**, along with chief literary critic **Johanna Thomas-Corr**, and **Ceci Brown-ing** and **Laura Hackett**, assistant literary editor and deputy books editor respectively.

Could it be that the eminent Banville’s decision to sup at the trough of commercial detective/crime fiction has not gone down particularly well among the worthies who decide who is in and who is out when it comes to proper literary accolades?

It was in 2006, the year after his Booker scoop, that Banville started churning out crime fic-

tion – beginning with *Christine Falls*, under the pen name of Benjamin Black. In his familiar self-deprecating way, the novelist has described these bukes (many of which are set in the dreary 1950s and feature the ‘hero’ detective Quirke) as being “cheap fiction” and the trouble is that many others agree.

Clearly, JB cleaned up with this rather lucrative side gig (although in recent years it has increasingly become his bread and butter) with the moolah boosted by assorted TV adaptations. The last few page-turners have even boasted Banville’s real name, but a so-called alternative history/crime novel, *The Secret*

Guests, was attributed to one BW Black. That risible effort was based around the wartime evacuation of young British princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, to Co Tipperary to escape the threats of WWII’s London Blitz.

Not surprisingly, the novel failed to make the ST’s list of top-notch fiction but what might interest Banville is that, of the 25 authors whose work did feature, almost 30% were Irish scribblers.



John Banville

Colm Tóibín (Brooklyn) of course made the cut, as did **Sebastian Barry** (*Day Without End*). Then there was **Anne Enright** (*The Green Road*), **Sally Rooney** (*Conversations With Friends*), **Anna Burns** (*Milkman*), **Eimear McBride** (*A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing*) and **Paul Murray** (*The Bee Sting*).

At least Banville can check his bank balance for solace.

THE EDINBURGH Fringe is over for this year and a notable result was Dan Colley’s Lost Lear picking up one of the Scotsman Fringe First awards.

The show (a “remix” of Shakespeare’s play) debuted in Ireland in 2022 when it was produced by the Riverbank Arts Centre and the Mermaid Arts Centre, before popping up at the Dublin Theatre Festival.

Culture minister Patrick O’Donovan was quick to claim some credit last week, as the department’s Culture Ireland (CI) funding body provided €48,000 to help with Lost Lear’s 23 performances in Edinburgh.

Of the eight productions CI funded for the 2025 Fringe, this was the biggest grant, which is good news for Colley as the Scotsman’s prestigious award carries no monetary element.



TALLY HO TO YORK

THE OWNERS of *Lady Iman* – the Tally Ho branch of the **O’Callaghan**

family – have overruled trainer **Ger Lyons** by supplementing their speedy filly for York’s Coolmore Wootton Bassett Nunthorpe Stakes on Friday. **Roger O’Callaghan**

– who part-owns the home-bred filly with his mother **Anne**, father **Tony** and brother **Henry** – clearly has huge confidence in the horse, which is a daughter of Tally Ho’s leading first season stallion, *Star Man*.

Lady Iman’s regular rider,



Lady Iman

Colin Keane, who missed the Group 3 win at Goodwood at the end of July through whip suspension, will be once again out of luck for the ride at York, with the filly set to carry just 8 st 2 lbs, well below Keane’s minimum riding weight. He will be replaced by veteran lightweight rider **Joe Fanning**, who originally hails from Co Wicklow.

It is expected that the speedster filly will head to Del Mar later in the year for the \$1m Breeder’s Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint – which is Lyons’s original target for her and a race that he won last year with *Magnum Force*.

THE FAMOUS red and black silks of Dawn Run returned to the winners’ enclosure on August 6 when they were donned by Gabriella Hill aboard the Henry de Bromhead-trained Trubshaw, who made all the running to land Sligo’s Guinness Handicap.

Trubshaw is part-owned by the father of the winning rider – Benjamin Hill, son of Dawn

Run’s late owner, Charmian Hill. While Gabriella was still attached to Jim Bolger’s yard when riding the third winner of her fledgling career, she now heads over to the UK to fill her new position as apprentice to the Stuart Williams stable, a move orchestrated by former jockey, Gordon ‘Flash’ Power.

Hill’s grandmother, Charmian, rode into her 60s, earning her the nickname ‘Gallop-ing Granny’ and her final ride was a winning one aboard wonder mare Dawn Run in a bumper at Tralee back in 1982, after which the then Turf Club refused to renew her jockey’s licence.

LADY KAI’S COLLAPSE

THE IRISH leg of the Fegentri World Championship for amateur riders was run at Leopardstown earlier this month but the race lost much of its appeal for punters when the **Ross O’Sullivan**-trained favourite, *Lady Kai*, genuflected leaving the stalls and unseated rider **Josh Williamson**.

Lady Kai, a Sea The Stars filly, is owned by Catherine Kinane,

wife of former champion jockey, **Mick Kinane**, and was bred through the couple’s Eadling Farm company. Although a half-sister to the high-class **Aidan O’Brien** pair, *Chicago* and *Mikhail Glinka*, *Lady Kai* has failed to match her siblings’ racecourse performances. She has only managed to win two low-grade handicaps.

Oblivious to the unseating drama at the stalls in Leopardstown, the **David Harry Kelly**-trained *Louiescall* made all the running under **Teagan Padgett** to score a comfortable success.

Prior to the race, the IHRB stewards panel, chaired by **Laurence McFerran**, received a report from **Pat Malone** (IHRB clerk of the scales) that the rider of the **Sabrina Harty**-trained *Supreme Law*, **Maria Kelly**, had weighed out at 6 lbs overweight, of which only a possible two pounds extra had been declared.

Evidence was heard from Kelly, who claimed there was a discrepancy between her weighing scales at home and the scales at the course but, having considered the evidence, the stewards cautioned the jockey regarding her responsibility to carry the correct allotted weight in the future.