

# A COMPLETE HISTORY OF PARTIES IN N.I. (1921-2021) — IN PROGRESS

1921

**Barn parties** (countryside, every county) — *every year of the past century & counting:* "Country folk are the original gangster event managers: big space that fits a lot of people; self-catered; pop-up bar; someone knows someone with a microphone & speaker; & once the smoking ban came in, a sheep trailer makes for an ideal smoking area (NI climate appropriate)." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

1922

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1932

**Belfast Outdoor Relief Strike Storms the Workhouse** (Lisburn Road): "The Poor Laws had been scrapped in the South in 1924 & in Britain in 1928 but Stormont kept them in operation. This gave the jobless a very raw

deal. Demonstrators got past the police lines & 144 were admitted to the workhouse as inmates. Once inside they refused to obey orders & were reported singing & dancing throughout the night. Three were arrested & removed from the building."

1933

1934

1935

1936

1937

1938

1939

1940

**The One & Only Jackie Wright** (Paradise Club, opposite the Turkish Baths, Upper Donegall Street): "The club's opening-night gig, Saturday 3rd February."

1941

**Blitz All-Nighter** (Ulster Hall): "Easter Tuesday. Irish singer Delia Murphy was performing in the Grand Dame when Belfast was blitzed by German bombs. As the city turned to an apocalyptic scene outside, Murphy played on, entertaining the crowd who could do nothing but wait to see what morning would bring. Around 900 people were killed that night, & more than half of the homes in Belfast were hit."

1942

1943

**Jitterbugging GIs Break the Floor** (Ulster Hall): During World War II, Belfast was the

first port for American soldiers before the battlefields of Europe. They jitterbugged the nights away with such enthusiasm, that on one occasion the floor gave way. So important was that dance floor to the morale of the troops the U.S. Embassy paid for a new solid oak replacement."

1944

1945

1946

**Wedding Party** (Lurgan): "Unfortunately things were rationed & in short supply. My mother baked the wedding cake & told the guests they could eat the cake but not the silver balls that decorated it as she had to use small ball bearings for the decorations."

☆☆☆☆☆

1947

1948

1949

1950

**Lunchtime Jives** (Plaza Ballroom, Chichester Street) — *throughout the '50s*: "Quick bite to eat, little bit of jiving & shaking then back to work, it was magic ... I worked in an office in Arthur St. & did without lunch so that I would have more time to jive! ... When we got caught jiving in the factory at lunchtime time we used to go to the Plaza ... Great for a punch-up as well."

1951

1952

1953

1954

1955

1956

1957

1958

**Trevor Jenkins & the All Stars** (Fiesta, Hamilton Street): "You used to queue up Saturday afternoon for tickets; all the girls would be there in their curlers. I think it was four shillings & sixpence then. They had a milk bar with long bench seats. If you clicked you would invite the girl up for a Coke & have a wee curt on the seats."

1959

1960

**Sammy Houston's on Thursday Nights** (jazz club on Great Victoria Street) — *throughout the early '60s*: "Bottle of cheap wine & a couple of Guinness before I went & I was anybody's."

1961

**Roly Stewart & the Rocking R's** (Ophir, Salisbury Bowling Club) — *the very early '60s*: "First rock 'n' roll heard in Belfast."

1962

**Meeting My Future Husband at the Flamingo** (Ballymena): "The first night he said he had to run to catch the last bus, sure but we made a date for the Saturday night and the rest is history."

1963

**Catholics & Protestants Got Along Famously** (Astor, bottom of the Falls Road) — *early to mid-'60s*: "Best dancehall in Belfast; manys a night I walked home with a wee girl from the Springfield Road."

**The Night JFK Was Murdered** (Astor, bottom of the Falls Road): "I was blocked & started to fight with the group because I wanted on stage to sing. Tony & the Telstars was their name. I was unceremoniously ejected. Good craic."

**1964**

**Chaos at the Stones Concert** (Ulster Hall): "The Rolling Stones only managed to play around 13 minutes of their set before hysterical fans broke up the show. The hall was so packed that fainting girls had to be passed overhead & onto the stage, before being removed from the hall — some of them strapped to stretchers to contain their excitement."

**1965**

**Memories Party** (West Belfast) - *happened again in 1970*: "It was a family thing. We all had to do a turn, i.e. sing or poetry"

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**1966**

**Grab-a-Granny Nights** (69 Club, High Street) - *sometime in the '60s*: No further info available, thankfully

**1967**

**Portaferry Gala** (Portaferry) — *still going, now in its 54th year*: "Egg & spoon race, married women's race, pillow fight, pram race..."

**LSD in the Sugar Lumps?** (coffee house at the Maritime): "OMG I certainly never heard that rumour & thank goodness I didn't take sugar!!"

**1968**

**1969**

**1970**

**No Roy Orbison for You** (Milanos in Bangor): "My friend Sue & I couldn't get in so we sat on the wall outside & cried our lamps out."

**1971**

**Led Zeppelin's New Tune** (Ulster Hall): "The band debuted 'Stairway to Heaven' at the gig. John Paul Jones, the band's bassist, recalled that the crowd were 'all bored to tears waiting to hear something they knew'."

**1972**

**Rory Ends the Drought** (Ulster Hall): "The Irish rock legend is practically revered because he consistently played here throughout the Troubles — even as other artists shied away. Before Gallagher's performance on New Year's Day there had been no major public live music events in Belfast for *six whole months*."

**1973**

**Bay City Rollers** (Milanos in Bangor) — *or maybe 1974?*: "The promoter didn't employ enough bouncers & the stage was stormed by the crowd during the first number & that was the end of the show. He did a runner & as far as I know no one got their money back. I was in the support band & we had to finish the show."

**1974**

**The Belfast Pavlova Party** (North Belfast) — *sometime in the '70s*: "The party was in full swing, all laughing, drinks flowing etc. when suddenly there was a loud scream. We all ran downstairs to find our dog Cleo sitting in the hall with what looked like a white mask on. It was the main event dessert! The person who had made the pavlova took off her shoe to throw at the dog; the shoe hit a vase (a wedding present) & everyone lost it completely." ☆☆☆☆☆

**1975**



1976

1977

**No Insurance for The Clash** (Ulster Hall): "Belfast City Council were slightly uncertain about the security risks — & *deeply* uncertain about the suspicious new 'punk' phenomenon sweeping the country. When insurance was cancelled for the gig, hundreds of disappointed fans were left outside with nothing to do & nowhere to go. They were soon met by riot police & violence erupted. Terri Hooley said it may have been 'the only riot of the Troubles where Catholics & Protestants were fighting on the same side'."

1978

1979

**Not a Bachelor Party** (Ardoyne): "My dad only went to show his face, but when he arrived there was only one other person, a man in his 70s singing Irish country in the corner. Dad ended up getting hammered with the groom to be. They were eventually joined by the singer, who turned out to have a small dog in his jacket, which emerged now & again for some crisps. Anyway, between them, they realised that the groom wasn't actually getting married at all. Nobody really knows why he lied about it. My dad and the country singer found out they were related on his mother's side, & kept in touch." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

1980

**More Break Dancing** (Ulster Hall): Unfortunately, the American floor (cf. 1943) was not quite strong enough to match the force of the fans that flocked to support Dexys Midnight Runners. The floor again collapsed as the crowd danced to 'Come On Eileen', but they simply moved to the back of the hall & kept the show going."

1981

**Every House Party Ever** (between the Ports [-rush/-stewart], Belfast & Downpatrick) — *continues till 2001*: "I am sitting at the sticky table in the back kitchen of a cold damp terraced house surrounded by fag butts & lager cans, watching a friend go googly-eyed at some tall bloke they were too scared to chat up." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

1982

1983

1984

1985

1986

**Attack on Jerusalem Street** (Holyland): "A party was literally attacked by police following a noise complaint. People were handcuffed to railings & beaten. I was at the party but I managed to get outside."

1987

**The RUC Party Down** (Giro's, Donegall Street) — *in the late '80s anyway*: "The RUC were driving down Donegall Street & they heard the noise. So they came in & joined the party. It was just really surreal. I'm sure they were drunk as well, on duty. Well, I think a couple of them were sober, trying to ferry the drunk police officers out. And we were all looking at them. It was a bit odd."

1988

**Women-Only Discos** (Giro's, Donegall Street): "They were having a parallel experience to the punks: When they organised women-only discos they were kinda looked at by people who owned the bars as weird, so we were a welcoming environment."

1989

**Teenage House Party** (north-North Belfast) — *could also have been 1990*: “Free house. Spilt the contents of the deep-fat fryer on the kitchen floor — disaster. Cigarette butts were left inside an ornament.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

1990

**Actors Are Hardcore** (Belfast in cheap, rented housing) — *continues throughout the '90s*: “They would 'triple bomb' (i.e. take 3 Es) & get into a warm bath together fully clothed. They would spend days cycling between highs & lows, going to the shop occasionally & being VERY quiet buying sweets” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

1991

1992

1993

**Hampton Anarchy** (Southeast Belfast) — *there were about six of them, all told*: “People in the back garden hitting apples with a driver. My granda taking pictures as evidence to show my folks. My mate lying on my bed chilling at 2:30 a.m. & being traumatised by the sight of my 70-year-old granny sleepwalking naked to the loo.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

1994

1995

**The Party that Banned Our School from Ever Having Another Party** (a hotel outside Larne): “Returning to the dance floor we briefly danced in the ever-expanding lake, but the DJ saw the tidal wave coming & fearing for his decks he pulled the plug.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

1996

1997

1998

**Random Tate's Avenue Party** (South Belfast): “I ending up in the kitchen talking to a drag queen. She reached into the bread bin & told me to close my eyes. I opened them to find two silicone breast implants in my hands.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Agra Wing Ding** (Ormeau Road) — *lasts till 2005*: “Copious amount of class As taken; too many stories to tell in this.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Rollerskates & Proclaimers** (Omagh at my friend's house): “Someone had the genius decision to make peach schnapps jelly... The kettle remained peachy for some time after that.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

1999

**Celebrating the Millennium through the Medium of Dance** (a fancy gaff off the Malone Road): “Pete dancing through the flower beds, blocked, using a found piece of rope as a dancey ribbon.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Millennium Party** (North Belfast): “I remember my Aunt playing the piano & us having a singalong.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Vico's** (Belfast City Centre): “A blow-out after a break up. I was trying to forget her, yet bumped into her on every floor, accompanied by funk, house & indie music respectively. I danced defiantly. I danced badly.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**After Hours Club** (Belfast City Centre): “Everyone just so happy to still be out dancing at 4 a.m.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

2000

**Turning 21 in the Year 2000** (Holyland): “Drank champagne, smoked cigars & a stripper showed up!” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆



2001

2002

**The Phantom Party** (some stranger's spare bedroom, Stranmillis): "We meandered up only to find Jim's ground floor apartment in darkness. Fortunately one of his windows was open... We helped ourselves to bottled beers in the fridge & some thoughtfully pre-prepared sandwiches... After an undetermined amount of time I was shaken awake by a tall bearded man in a Harlequins rugby shirt who was unsurprisingly indignant at us sleeping in his home."

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2003

**The Night of Five Parties** (Holyland, Stranmillis, Ormeau): "Many warm embraces, a total soakin' on the streets, cold early morning regrouping, hijacking stereos to play They Might Be Giants, chip-quests, much much dancing." ☆☆☆☆☆

2004

**Anything Goes Except Incest & Folk Dancing** (NI goes to Nottingham): "Copious plastic cups of 'punch' — a rather rancid mix of WKD blue, vodka, cider & Haribo (!) ... I still have internal bruising on my thigh from a drunken fall onto a breeze block in the garden ... Spin the bottle — no incest allowed!" ☆☆☆☆☆

**A Twelfth Tradition** (West Belfast) — *continues through 2013 or so*: "It always included a lot of alcohol, talking about random crap & a visit to the local bonfire at around 3 a.m. (so those who were expected to go could take a photo to prove they were there). We spent the Twelfth together, horrendously hungover, watching shitty movies & eating too much. After dinner things would wind down as it was safe for everyone to head home." ☆☆☆☆☆

2005

**Sectarian Afterparty** (Florenceville Avenue): I was sitting in the living room of an artist's house in South Belfast drinking craft beer when a random spide who clearly didn't know anybody & was lost started asking everyone if they were Catholic or Protestant. The host asked him to leave, but I started sticking up for him (just because I was annoyed at how pretentious everyone was acting), so I was asked to leave too. I always felt that like that was some kind metaphor, but for what I'm not sure." ☆

**My First Going Away Party** (off the Stranmillis Road): "I got quite drunk & ended up kissing on the couch which led to one of the briefest (nicest) relationships of my life." ☆☆☆☆☆

2006

**Ice Box** (South Belfast): "It was the afterparty location & I lived there. Drinking, dancing, singing, random strangers, trying to have a weekend free of parties & people showed up anyway!" ☆☆☆☆☆

**Shine Has Compassion for Couple Nuance** (University Road): "My boyfriend had got us tickets as a gift. I had been recently complaining that we didn't go out on the town enough & I needed to dance. Our quarrels escalated & the night before, he tore up the tickets into little tiny pieces in front of me. I made him go with me to Shine with the ticket pieces in a plastic bag & explain what had happened." ☆☆☆☆☆

**Mario Party** (Lisburn Road): "Me and my best mate dressed up as the Super Mario & Luigi DJs. We had handmade cardboard clouds, question blocks & 1-up mushrooms for a cartoon backdrop adorning the walls of our student house (the only time the inexplicably yellow-painted walls ever looked good)." ☆☆☆☆☆

## 2007

**Thanksgiving, Many Times** (Rugby & Crumlin Roads) — *every year till 2015*: “We cooked turkey for 30 to 60 people, we Bannoffee-Offed, we drank the wines, we smoked on the fire escape & we listened to Arlo Guthrie. Every year we invited puppies & one time our mate Andrew brought one.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**The Lost Hostel Party** (oh, I have NO idea): “As we drove further & further into a part of the city that did not look familiar, the driver said ‘you’d wanna be careful with your accent around here’... After circling around & finding it nowhere the driver left me out at a payphone (A PAYPHONE!) to call someone to get the real address. The party wasn’t all that memorable & the attractive boy wasn’t there.” ☆ ☆ ☆

**Sister Act** (Rugby Road area): “I was told I might meet a girl who liked me at this party. It was some kind of costume party & I remember a fabulous creature with a matching physique dressed as Lara Croft. ‘Is it her?’ I asked hopefully. No. It was a dumpy blonde blacked up as Whoopi Goldberg in *Sister Act*. ‘You’re South African, you should like that!’ I did not like that. I drank all the red wine I could find & left. My best friend told me this was the mature thing to do.” ☆ ☆

**An Eight-Year-Old’s Birthday Party** (close to Comber): “It was a typical kids’ play area, very sweaty & run-down. My friend took me by the hand & we climbed up to the top of the jungle gym. She turned around & kissed me — which is something I didn’t know two girls could do — & then promptly went down the slide. It was probably my first indication that I wasn’t straight.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## 2008

**Your Greatest Fear** (near the Hatfield): “A Halloween party where you had to dress as your greatest fear. I went as a cruise ship singer. A students union officer (male)

dressed as Sarah Palin as president. I remember making out with a bisexual law student in the hallway.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Bonfire Photoshoot** (Belfast Castle gardens): “Watching the bonfires pop up around the city & beyond, you could smell the burning tyres all the way up by the castle. Shenanigans with long-exposure photography, posing like nutters & rolling down hills. Surely to god we were drinking — bad gin cocktails from waterbottles, at a guess.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## 2009

**Party Taxi** (driving across Belfast): “A crazy lady taxi driver who totally ‘got’ us & sang Rihanna’s ‘S&M’ with all of us at the top of our lungs.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**My Sister’s 27th Birthday** (Finaghy): “A Ferrero Rocher mountain, a piñata whose head ended up under my bed, a fire pit & a vomit tsunami in the living room of my sister’s living room. Oh plus a big dramatic scene on the road outside when one of the girls fought with her boyfriend. We left at 5 a.m.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Bringing the House Down Like It’s 2009ish** (East Belfast, near Cregagh Road perhaps?): “There was a cat-themed singalong in the living room which led to the radiator being leaned on & then dropping away from the wall. It was surely a wild night. I’m still laughing at it.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**St Paddy’s Ladder** (Holyland): “Myself & a friend decided to sit on the roof of a bay window to watch the mayhem below. Two (very drunk) guys asked how we got up there. We told them that we had climbed up a ladder, but a guy dressed as St Patrick had stolen it. They asked lots of questions about what St Patrick looked like, which way he went, etc. We made up a lot of nonsense (like he had two live snakes with him)... After a while, in the distance we could see them heading back towards us carrying a ladder.” ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆



## 2010

**Halloween House Party** (Banbridge): "I was dressed as a zombie with blood down my face. We were drinking vodka from the bottle & I got really sick, I was throwing up in the toilet for half an hour & came out to a door punched down & a fight dispersing."

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**Death to Delawab** (Ashley Avenue): "Art & nibbles then full-tilt, everyone in Belfast, never happens like that anymore mayhem."

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**Asylum Shoot** (Central Belfast): "Making a music video with a party atmosphere; we had a snowball fight, got drunk, danced like loonies, accidentally smashed a few lights halfway through the shoot, danced a bit more now with big shadows & felt pretty good about ourselves." ☆☆☆☆☆

**The Birthday Party that Ended Birthday Parties** (Ravenhill Avenue): "The fancy dress theme was 'your favourite comedy character'. I was dressed as Old Gregg from *The Mighty Boosh*. My housemate's friend made me a cake in the shape of a penis. It was pretty detailed. The balls were chocolate cake but the shaft was Victoria Sponge. I had been given tie-on roller skate attachments for my shoes, so I was speeding through the house & falling over a lot... A friend dressed as a cowboy (unsure how this fitted with the theme) had passed out sitting on the toilet. His trousers were down, but his underpants were still on. He was still wearing his cowboy hat. It took hours to wake him up." ☆☆☆☆☆

## 2011

**Surprise Birthday** (Seamus Heaney Centre): "Music, speeches, drinks, canapés."

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**The Scottish Inquisition** (one of those warren-like streets off Stranmillis): "Mid-flow & nearing the punchline I was abruptly halted when the Scottish boyfriend of the birthday girl, with the general demeanour of

a Jeremy Kyle contestant, shouted 'WOW...HANG ON A MINUTE...ARE YOU GAY?!' He leaps to his feet, shaking with the homophobia of a small (majority voting DUP) village. 'GET THE FUCK OUT OF THIS HOUSE!!' I gather myself up & stand to leave, amazed at the silence in the room. Outside I bump into two lads that are two years above me, quite intimidating, they don't know me well. They asked me what was wrong & then marched into the crowded living room: 'EVERYBODY OUT, EXCEPT YOU, Y'PIECE OF SHIT.' They thoroughly 'sorted him out' & carried him to me to apologise. He was in a sorry state indeed." ☆

## 2012

**Nude Halloween Party** (off Ravenhill, I think): "I ordered a costume off the internet. It arrived and did not look like the internet. It was skin-tight & largely transparent. At the party, people point at my dick & make comments (strangely a mix of remarks about it being too much or too little). One of my coworkers played 'Balls to the Wall', an '80s German hair-metal classic. And was so overcome with joy that he stripped bollock naked. And danced. With a mop. And people took photos." ☆☆☆☆☆

## 2013

**The Long Haul** (Belfast): "Our samba band was class craic & loved to party every weekend. So many people crammed into a tiny space, live music, dancing, rolling around, rolling up the stairs, sliding down the stairs, bum drums, bosom pillows, sofa snoozes, hot tubs filled to the brim with people making hippy soup, laughing, hugging, kissing, connecting!" ☆☆☆☆☆

## 2014

**Appletini Nights** (Surrey Street) — *lasts till 2019, observed on St Patrick's day, as well as Appletini Night*: "We drank appletinis & the floors would get really sticky." ☆☆☆☆☆

**Coke Party** (Cregagh Road): "Some of the people at our party were actors so everyone



from *The Fall* (BBC series about a sexy serial killer) afterparty crashed our place. A hot TV producer told me to get out of my own shed, & a famous actor did coke off the lid of my toilet. Then they all left for Ollie's." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## 2015

**Magical Mystery Tour** (Lissan House): "Black tie 40th birthday that started in Belfast & ended in the faded grandeur of Lissan House (in the snow!). Drinks in the grand hall, dinner in the ballroom & even an appearance by the Three Little Maids :)" ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Suited & Booted NYE** (Empire Music Hall) — *lasts through 2019*: "Dress up to the nines throwdown. NI Soul Troop, The Vibes, AFresh, Skallions, Amy Montgomery & many more over the years." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## 2016

**Zimbo-Irish** (South Belfast): "Zimbabweans embracing to be living in Belfast. Made Zimbabwean food, played African music & invited local people to join." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Art Chaos Queers** (Catalyst Arts, Sunflower, Kremlin, a random car park & an artist's studio): "A friend's exhibition. Drinks, dancing, hanging out, chats, make-outs." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## 2017

**Auntie's Social Club Halloween** (Maple Leaf, East Belfast): "Giant bear heads, drag acts, meat raffle, vintage everything, VFW small-town dive bar feels in full effect." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Jack's Awful "House Parties"** (near Strabane) — *till 2019*: "There were two, but maybe he's stopped inviting me. 'Gigs' in his back garden where he would have bands made up of younger teenagers singing White Stripes covers with no microphone & not knowing the lyrics. In the garage a

bunch of kids were smoking from bongs made out of BPM bottles & popping pills that looked suspiciously like TicTacs." ☆

### **My Ma Wouldn't Be Best Pleased**

(Portrush): "Mum left for the weekend, tried to do like the American movies & had a wee 3-day blowout. Word got out, perhaps double the amount of people show up?! Major downside being my siblings can't clean up for shit. Good thing my ma's a wee party animal herself." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Haypark Hodown** (Haypark Avenue): "When Janelle Monáe's 'Tightrope' came on, the Ikea table was a podium for all. Its legs held out until the third person joined in dancing on it. Then it buckled." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

### **Simon's Awesome Birthday Party**

(Accidental Theatre): "Surprise 60th. We got his mom & sister to come by, got many of his friends abroad to record some videos to wish him well, live music, lots of friends to celebrate a very loved person." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## 2018

**Why I Hate New Years** (outside Coleraine): "It was like two different tribes at either end of the living room. At midnight I sipped Prosecco, looked around the room & realised I'd outgrown a lot of my friends. I've never felt as lonely at a party ever but it gave me the push to cut toxic friendships out of my life." ☆ ☆

### **April Babies Harry Potter Party**

(Corrymeela Centre, Ballycastle): "Sorting hat ceremony upon entry; beer pong on a miniature quidditch pitch; dining room decorated with house banners & floating paper candles; butterbeer; Harry Potter pubquiz & amazing costumes including Moaning Myrtle with a toilet seat around her neck & a Golden Snitch." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Mansplaining Don Giovanni** (weird South Belfast ground-floor digs): "I was buying pizza to help everyone sober up. The director was off his face on coke & followed

me into a bedroom when I was looking for my lost phone (I later found it in the middle of the road). I pushed him away, telling him that his predecessor had ALSO sexually harassed me, to which he responded, 'We all know he's a cunt'. We then had a conversation about how sleeping with staff was not befitting his position. He got off with an extra. Then he mansplained *Don Giovanni* to me." ☆ ☆

## 2019

**Strumpet Paradise** (NI goes to Sweden): "It just sort of ... happened. There was a tampon. Some gin. And a lot of questionable decision making. Unfortunately that's all I can give you..."

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**The Throwing Party** (Ormeau Road): "It was our friend Emma's 24th birthday. Late into the party someone jumped into my arms & I caught them. Someone saw this happen, & then there was a queue of people waiting to jump into my arms. Mercifully, they were all quite small & I only slightly wrecked my back."

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**Blanket Fort Birthday** (Holyland): "We were housesitting. Baked Dutch mini pancakes (*poffertjes*) & had an impromptu Irish music session in the wall-to-wall blanket fort with fiddle, flute & bodhran." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**The Hound of Ulster** (Derry): Halloween, obv's. The costume I try to finish on the train up (Bernard Black's 'smart casual jacket' of tax receipts) is shite. My mates give me a huge animal-skull mask. I march in the parade alongside other masked, robed folks. My mate (dressed as Cú Chulainn) is being pulled on a wagon. Later we meet up with his wife (dressed as Morrigan) & watch the fireworks & go to her stand-up gig at Bennigans, & then to the Anchor Bar all huddled upstairs & then I am very drunk. I walk home to Waterside. My mate gets there not long after & he's playing piano when I fall asleep on the couch." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## A Christmassy Party That Didn't Quite Come Off

(Sandy Row): "For the grand finale, in a room I'd filled with mattresses, hookahs, candles & scarves, I put on a costume of taped balloons. Underneath I wore nipple tassels, pants & stockings. The balloons were filled with random lightweight treats like sweeties or a fiver. Everyone had to pop the balloons with a kitchen knife. I thought at this point everyone would be semi intoxicated & enjoying themselves; in fact, the people who didn't like each other still didn't like each other. Finally someone broke up with their girlfriend via text. It was a bad scene. The next day me & some of the people who stayed over sang show songs with Baileys & chocolates & it was so much better." ☆ ☆

## 2020

**Welly Throwing** (Ormeau Park): "Birthday celebration. We had a welly-throwing competition." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Zoom Birthday** (in the kitchen of my old house): "I was still living with my ex, who'd gone to Italy to visit his new girlfriend, & I didn't want to be by myself. I baked my own birthday cake live on camera. I followed a recipe by Nigella & the end result was described as 'disconcertingly cheeseburger-like'. Eventually a little core group of us watched Dylan Moran clips & got wasted together. It was a beautiful night." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Zoom Boxing Day** (my living room floor, eventually): "It went on for \*eight hours\*. Drink was involved. Confessions of love were made. Poems were read. There were tears. We argued about David Bowie. The host was wearing one of those shirts that has a naked chest printed on it & it gave me PTSD." ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## 2021

Bring the new joys & terrors ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡



## SOURCES

[Party stories](#) — anonymous survey; party names & star ratings given by attendees)

[Belfast Forum](#) — namely the posts about gigs & ballrooms

Northern Ireland Screen's [Digital Film Archive](#)

[Our Generation: Giros](#) — NVTv

History of the [Portaferry Gala](#)

[1932: Belfast Outdoor Relief Strike](#) — libcom.org

[The Ulster Hall: Belfast's Window on the World](#) — BBC News

[Chaos at Stones Concert in Belfast, 1964](#) — RTÉ Archive

[11 of the Most Important Gigs in Northern Ireland's History](#) — Belfast Live

Good ol' Wikipedia

Word of mouth