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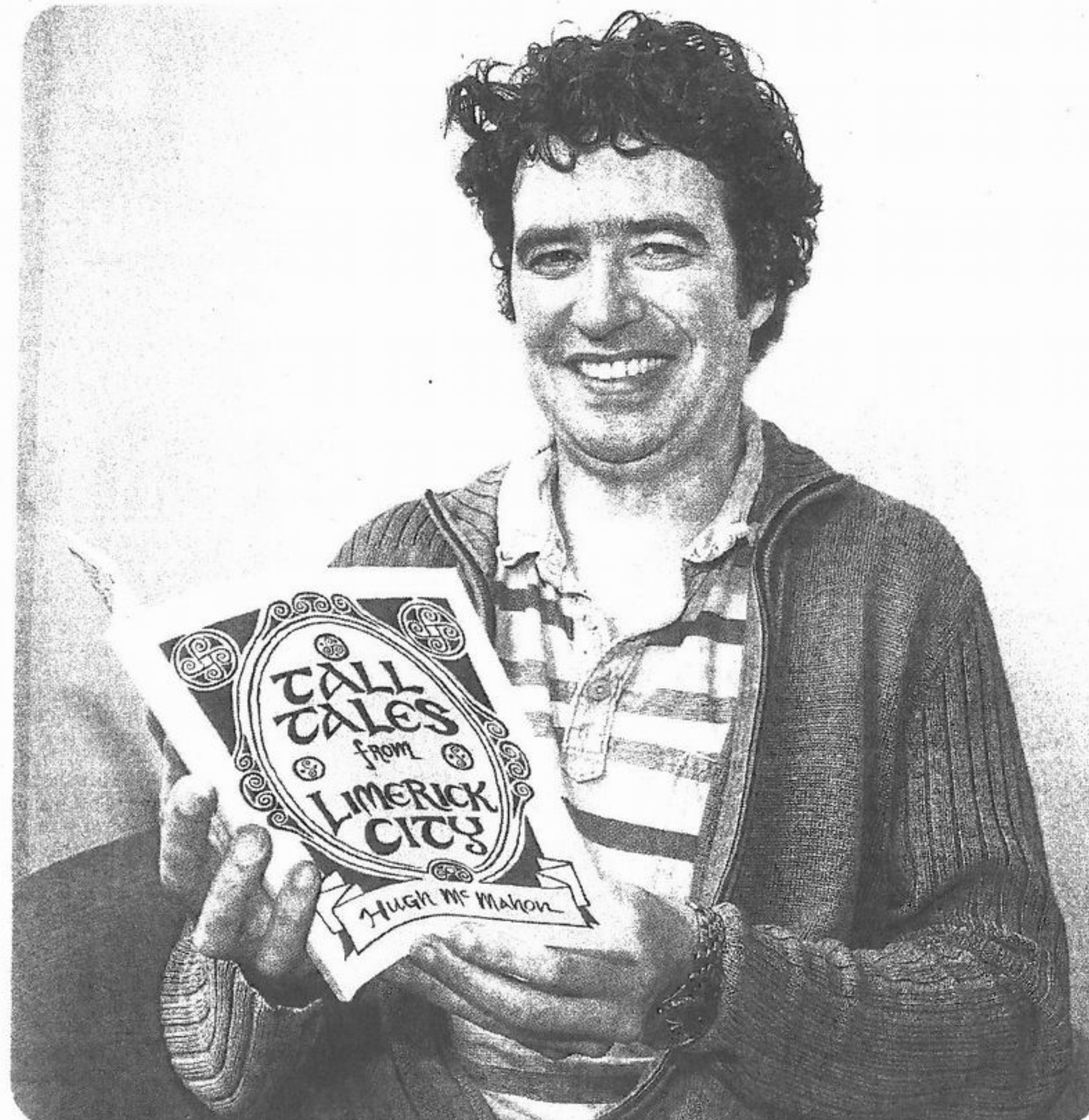
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Treaty City's Tallest Tales

Hugh McMahon tells **Maria Flannery** about his new folklore book, featuring the hilarious, the gruesome and the downright bizarre



Hugh McMahon with his newest book Tall Tales from Limerick City, which is launching this weekend PICTURE: ADRIAN BUTLER

DID you know that there was a tradition in which every new Mayor of Limerick would throw a dart into the river from a boat bearing the mayoral flag, to show that he was Admiral of the Shannon?

How about the connection between Jack the Ripper and the city? The serial killer's fifth and final victim is believed to have been Limerick born Jane Kelly, who fell into prostitution after her marriage engagement broke down.

These local anecdotes are just a sample of the 122 illustrated tales to be found in Hugh McMahon's latest publication — Tall Tales from Limerick City - the latest book from the Coonagh native about Limerick's local history and folklore.

“ They are stories that are worth repeating, that are maybe in danger of being forgotten ”

Hugh McMahon, Tall Tales from Limerick City

“They are stories that are worth repeating, that are maybe in danger of being forgotten,” he says, flicking through the book.

Completely hand-drawn and hand-written in black ink, it is one of those rare books that would interest anybody with even a passing interest in

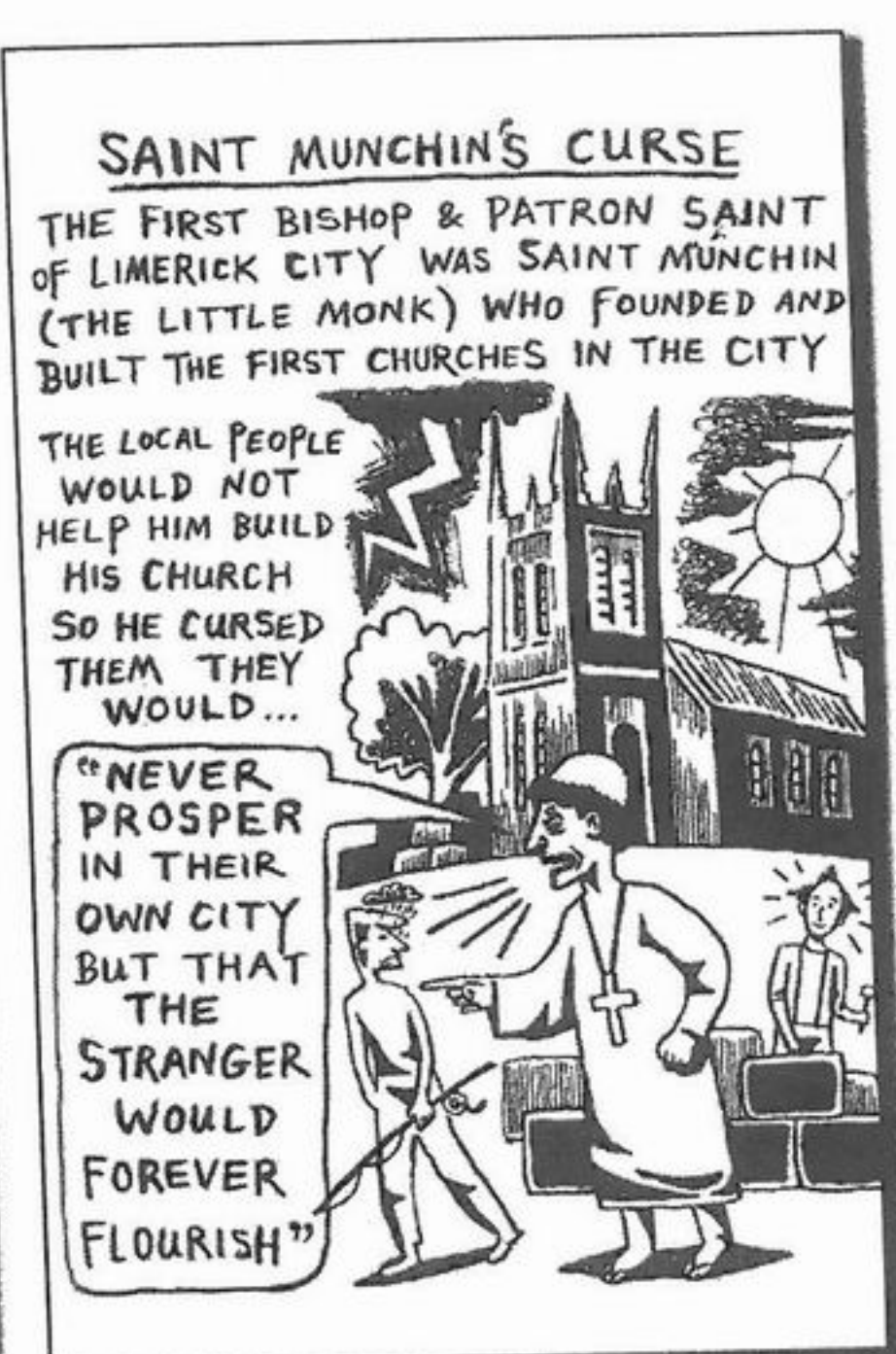
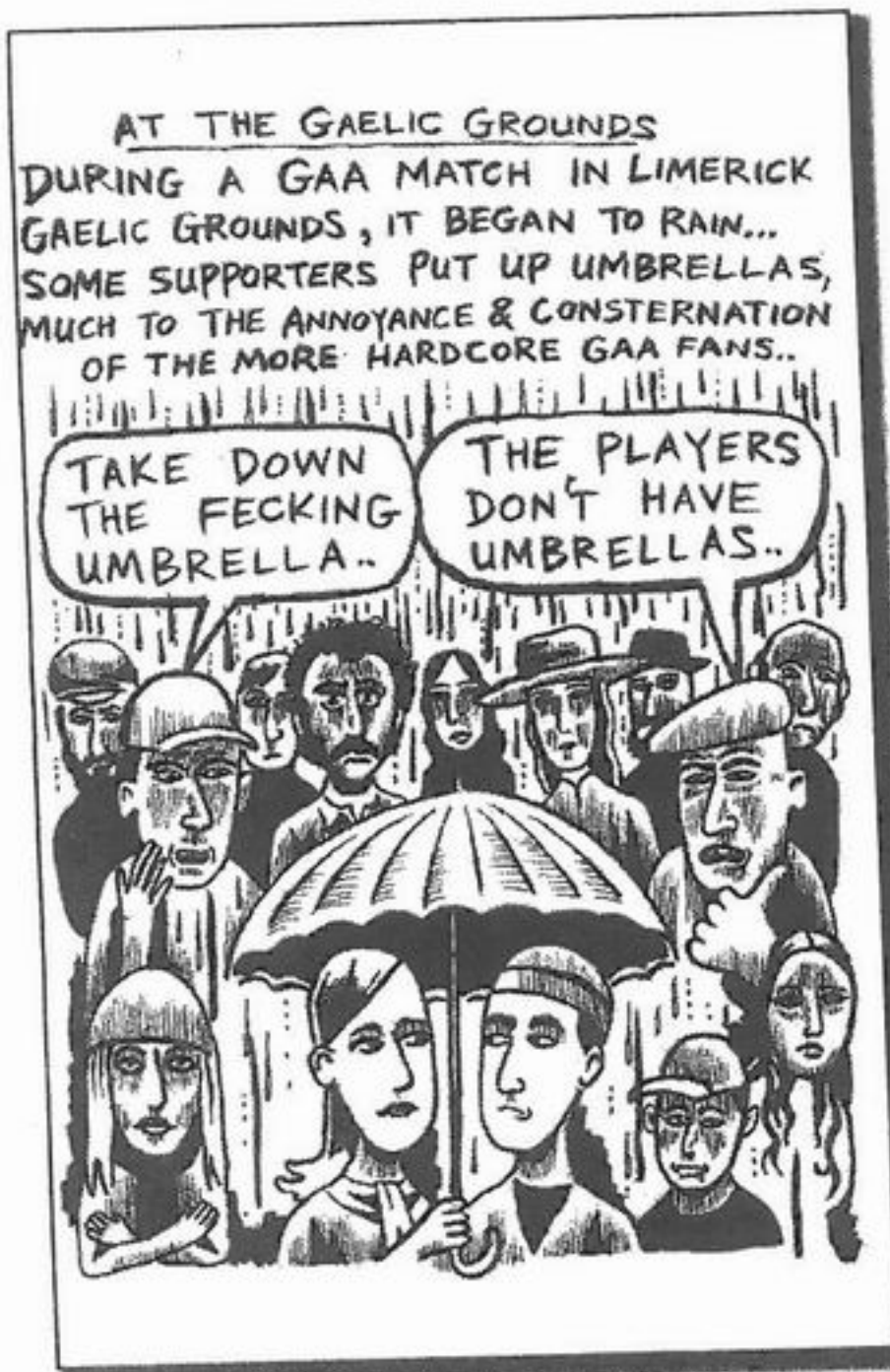
Limerick.

Text runs into detailed, comic-like illustrations, and back to text, and the little volume feels like no work at all to read.

“These are local interest stories that I've picked up from local history, and there's folklore and mythology mixed in with the history. They are interesting stories about local people, architecture and features,” said Mr McMahon.

He made use of kind help from local historians, books and archives, but some of the lesser-known, quirkier nuggets have come down through the generations by word of mouth.

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A sample of the pages in Tall Tales from Limerick City – all hand-drawn and handwritten by Hugh McMahon, who has spent around a year creating the pages from scratch

Quirky city tales all drawn up

CONTINUES FROM PAGE 1

"I'm not a historian, I couldn't stand over the truthfulness or not of any of them," he said, "it's more about the hearsay, the anecdotes and local folklore".

One of the book's truer tales is that of Christopher Colles, an Irish engineer from the 1700s who worked on various navigation and architectural projects in Limerick. It is said that his early work on the grid street designs for Newtown Pery influenced his later city planning work in New York city. Now, that's a claim to fame.

Daniel O'Connell, "The Great Liberator" who now stands in stone on O'Connell Avenue, did not advocate violence – and apparently always wore one black glove to remind himself of a killing he committed as a young

man.

And where did Watchhouse Cross get its name? Well, in times past, there was a booming black market for cadavers – dead bodies for the purpose of medical dissections.

Because of this, grave robbing was rampant, and locals had to keep watch over their graveyards. There was a watchhouse at Watchhouse Cross on the city's northside, to stop opportunistic robbers from stealing corpses from the cemetery in Ballynanty.

But besides grave-robbing, the Limerick people were truly an enterprising bunch. There's a story about how unscrupulous tourists would take chipmunks off the Treaty Stone, to have as a keepsake from their time in Limerick.

The 'local scallywags', writes Hugh, capitalised on the illicit trading of 'Treaty Stone relics',

It's about the hearsay, the anecdotes and the local folklore of Limerick city

Hugh McMahon, author and illustrator of Tall Tales from Limerick City

selling stones from the riverbank to naive tourists.

At least they saved the historic stone from being chipped into oblivion!

Every story in Hugh's Tall Tales is heightened with his illustrated characters' clever quips. The stories are often funny – but the speech bubbles are often hilarious, with singularly Limerick slang words jumping off the page in

what the reader imagines as a slugging Limerick accent.

Many of the stories will resonate with some of Limerick's older citizens, and reintroduce them for many of the younger generation.

An ideal gift for local people abroad, the author loves to hear of people sending them in small packages to Australia, America and around the globe.

His last publication, about Limerick slang, made its way abroad, and went down a treat with locals at home as well.

"I think the fact that it's all done by hand gives it a personal touch, and I didn't want it to be done on the computer with graphic design," said Hugh.

Injecting the old stories with modern, funny illustrations, makes the "folklore about Limerick more enjoyable" for those may not necessarily pick up a heavy history tome.

There are five chapters in the book, categorising the stories into the realms of history, places, religion, people and sport.

Mr McMahon studied painting at Limerick School of Art and Design, before embarking on teacher training and settling on art therapy. So, why history?

"My father would be very into the local history stuff, and there would have been a lot of books in the house. I kind of picked up the interest from there," he explained.

The book is being launched this Saturday, November 4, at Shannon Rowing Club on Sarsfield Bridge from 8pm, and all are welcome.

It will retail for €10 in O'Mahony's Bookshop, Crescent Bookshop, Copy That (Henry Street) and Wild Ireland (Nicholas Street).

Hostage situation in Cappawhite resource centre

DONAL O'REGAN

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A HOSTAGE will take place over three nights in Cappawhite but there will be no need for specialist garda negotiators to be called.

The local drama group is very busy rehearsing for their forthcoming production of The Hostage by Brendan Behan, set in 1960s Dublin.

On the surface the story appears to be serious drama. A young English soldier is kidnapped by the IRA on the eve of the execution of an Irish terrorist by the British. The soldier is to be murdered in retaliation.

The setting is a brothel in Dublin. The play is also a comedy of slapstick and satire, as well as a musical production with songs

The play is populated by the bawdy, the fanatical, the corrupt and the insane. The man who owns the building was a Republican patriot during the Easter Rising. The house is run by Pat, also of the old IRA, who has lost his enthusiasm for the cause. There are prostitutes, assorted clients, as well as a minor civil servant, who turns out to be a secret agent for the Irish police. Into this melange, Leslie is brought by the IRA, led by a fanatical officer.

The group are fortunate to have James McGrath as producer again following the great success of last year's production of Blood Brothers. There is a large cast and the group are delighted to welcome many new people. It will be staged in Cappawhite resource centre on



Gingergirl all about



Gingergirl has become thanks to her two daughters

It's new for Ging

WELCOME to all about little people!

Ask Gingergirl Hello Gingergirl,

I am looking for a recipe spreads a lot making me peeling in gingerbread. Can you please help? Aisling, Cappamore

Hello Aisling,

Obese gingerbread man say, I have become some two daughters' love of literally thousands of the various Farmers' Market. The beauty of working bashing (kneading) from some really cute, I mean thanks to my ever increasing some gingerbread deco

Gingerbread Men

(makes approx. 12)
75g of light brown sugar
2 tablespoons of gold
1 tablespoon of treacle
1 tablespoon of water
1 teaspoon of ground
1 teaspoon of ground
A pinch of cloves
Finely grated zest of a
95g of butter
1/2 teaspoon of bicarb
225g plain flour sifter
Tubes of icing (to dec

Put the sugar, syrup saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove the pan from the heat. Next, stir in the bicarbonate of soda. Next, stir in the remaining ingredients to form a manageable dough – add a little more flour if necessary. Leave the dough to cool for approximately 30 minutes. Pre-heat the oven to 180°C. Arrange them on the lightly floured surface. Bake for 10-12 minutes. Leave them to cool on a wire rack. Transferring them to a plate, make little faces or write letters on them. Store in an airtight container.

Contact gingergirl

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email: helen@gingergirl.ie
Gingergirl aka Helen produces a range of hand-made gingerbread made from local, seasonal ingredients available nationwide from selected food stores. Letters to 'gingergirl' erick.

You can follow gingergirl