

## News

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## HERITAGE

## Pigtown book is set to bring home the bacon

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LIMERICK is synonymous for its ham and a new book published by the Limerick Archives section of the City and County Council and Mary Immaculate College is all set to bring home the bacon.

*Pigtown – A History of Limerick's Bacon Industry* by Ruth Guiry and co-edited by Dr Maura Cronin and Jacqui Hayes traces the industry's unique history by shining an historical light on the four main bacon factories in Limerick.

O'Mara's, Matterson's, Shaw's and Denny's made Limerick famous for the quality of its bacon produce and linked the city and county in its production. This led to the growth of a large scale industry centred around the city, which quickly was nicknamed Pigtown.

The reputation of Limerick ham, the food culture that arose from a plentiful supply of cheap products, the story of the pork butchers, the pig buyers, the sounds of the city with factory horns signalling the call to work still resonates in local folklore.

A definitive account of this industry that operated at the centre of the city, supplied by the farms of rural county Limerick for over 180 years, had never been written – until now.



Ruth Guiry with local butcher Jack Spratt at the book launch

Ruth Guiry, who was commissioned to undertake the research under the guidance of Dr Maura Cronin from Mary Immaculate College said: "I had the pleasure of interviewing 27 people, who all contributed to my understanding not only of the bacon industry but also of the Limerick

social scene from the 1940s onwards. I am especially grateful to Joe Hayes, formerly of O'Mara's factory, for his help and advice with interviewees, contacts, photos and other details. I'd like to say a special thank you to Tony Punch, Sean Curtin among others for allowing me to use their photographs,

many of which have never been published before."

"Their stories and the images they donated have contributed enormously to capturing a sense of what the industry meant to Limerick and life within and outside the factories," she added.

## PIGTOWN – A HISTORY OF LIMERICK'S BACON INDUSTRY

is the fourth in a series of books published by the Limerick Archives section of Limerick City and County Council. The series began in 2012 with *Ranks Mills – The Industrial Heart of Limerick* by Dr Edward Whelan. In 2014 *Amazing Lace – A History of the Limerick Lace Industry* by Dr Matthew Potter was published, followed a year later by *City and Cemetery – A History of Mount Saint Lawrence, Limerick*, also by Dr Matthew Potter.

Limerick Archivist Jacqui Hayes who co-edited the book: "In Limerick Archives we have a small collection relating to Matterson's donated when the factory closed and it is very satisfying to see this book emerging from the surviving material and oral testimony."