

Left: Orla Wallace, Shauna Cahill and Rebecca Coughlan, St Mary's Park who are performing in Island Theatre Company and St Mary's Community Development Project's story of The Hannah Parr, and (right) Keith Crawford and Tara Henkenborg

Kids bring history to life on stage

By CLODAGH O'LEARY

THE story of a Norwegian emigrant ship which docked unexpectedly in Limerick in 1868 is to be brought to the stage by local school children.

The group of 16 children from St Mary's Park have been taking part in drama workshops since last October, run by Island Theatre Company and St Mary's Community

Development Project.

The children have researched the story of The Hannah Parr, which was bound for Canada, and was forced to make an emergency docking in Limerick, after it got into difficulty in the Atlantic.

It stayed for several months while repairs were carried out on the ship.

"Over 400 people aboard the ship made an unexpected stop in Limerick, and were docked here for two months, which would have been a big deal back then. I took the kernel of the idea from that, and from there we generated stories and came up with the script,"

explained Niamh Bowen, a drama and theatre practitioner and co-ordinator of the project.

The children taking part are aged between 10 and 12, and Ms Bowen is impressed with their work so far.

"They are amazing, it is so fantastic, it is much more difficult than bringing a play from the page to the stage. Playing Norwegian children is a challenge in itself, and added to that is that it is set 135 years ago," said Ms Bowen.

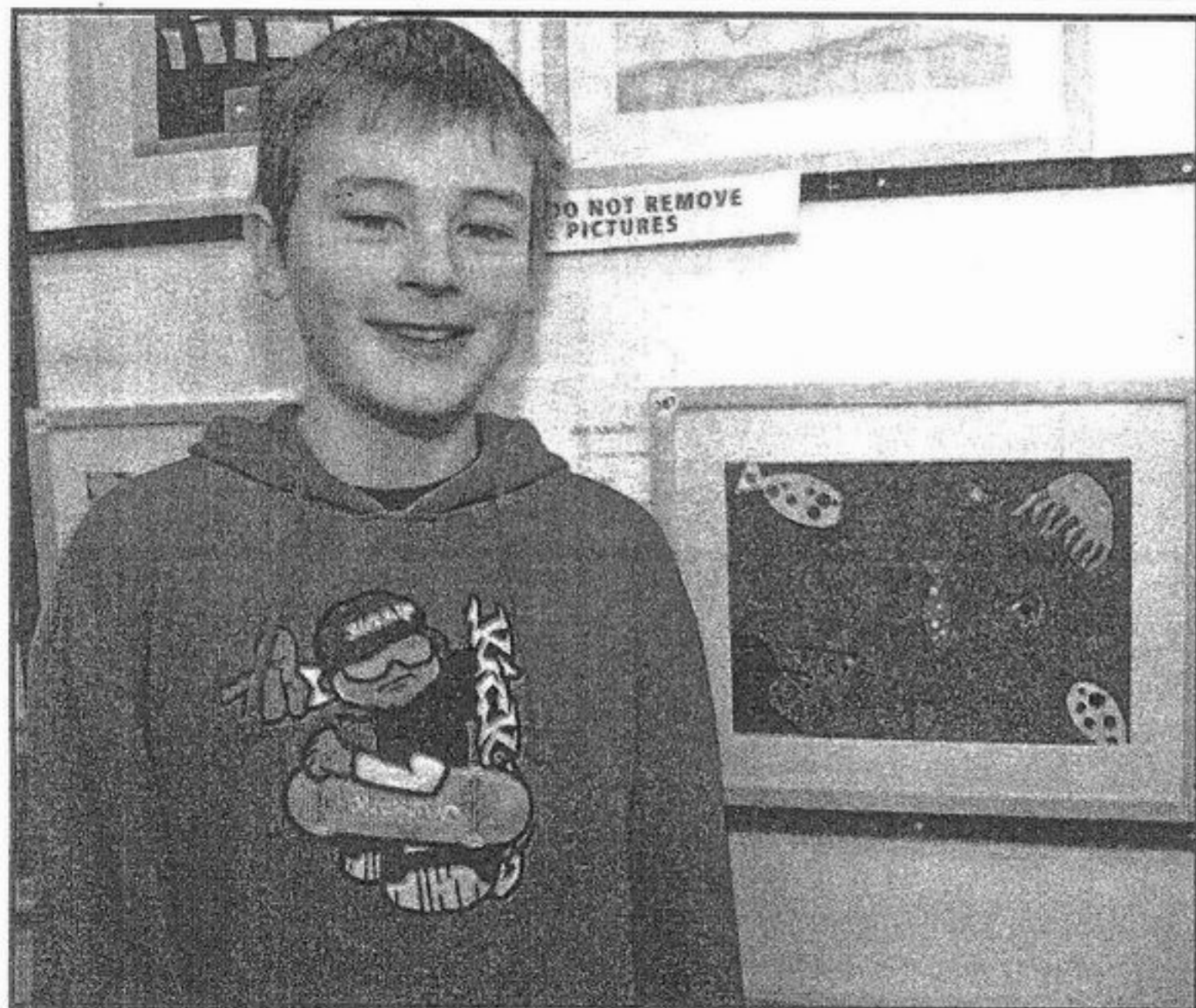
To make sure the play was historically accurate, Ms Bowen got in contact with the great grandson of one of the people who were aboard

The Hannah Parr.

"He is 70 years old, and living in Minnesota and has been in regular contact with me. He has given great advice, and has sourced some great material for us. He has also provided us with

recordings of Norwegian accents and music to give the play a really authentic feel," she said.

The project will culminate in two performances at St Mary's School, Kings Island on April 20 and 21 next.



Mathew Ryan, Corbally at St Michael's National School Art and Crafts Exhibition (LL)



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