

# Market trades in its old look

**Mike Dwane** visited the brand new Milk Market in Limerick at the weekend and saw the old institution had received an impressive new makeover with more space, more stalls and shops and a weather-proof cover. While it was generally acclaimed, it isn't quite to everyone's taste

**A** SURVEY conducted four years ago found it rained on Limerick's Milk Market 42 Saturdays out of 52, architect Michael Healy says, explaining some of the thinking behind the two-tonne, half-acre canopy which now covers the handsome stone square in the heart of the city.

Reopened on Saturday following months of redevelopment work costing €2 million, there was no opportunity on Saturday to test the water

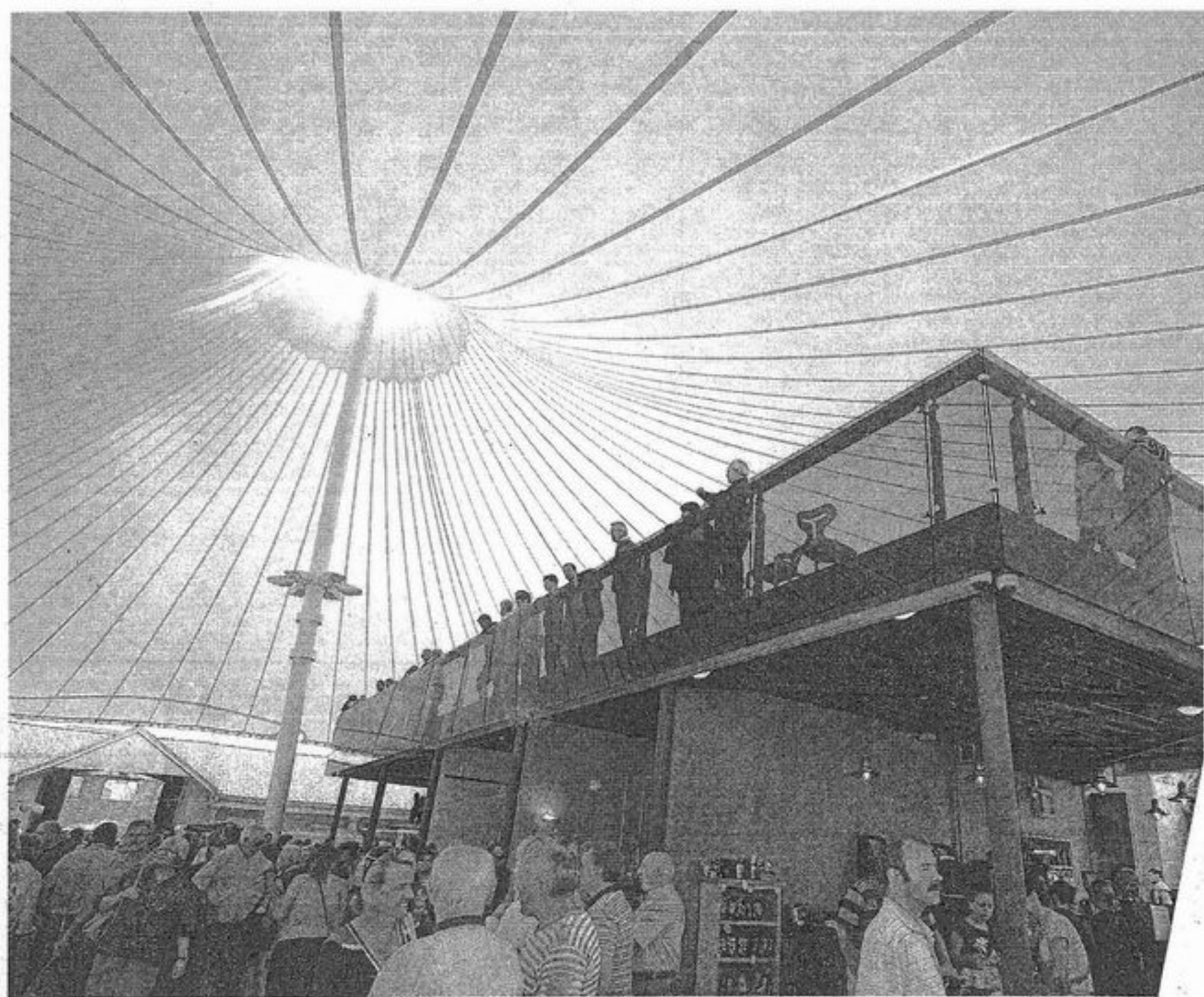
resistance of what some are already calling Ireland's biggest tent. The only thing pouring at the market was champagne as the reopening was blessed with glorious sunshine.

Across the city, tens of thousands of people were converging on the Limerick Tunnel to avail of the once in a lifetime chance to walk under the Shannon. If the allure of the tunnel was its novelty, the crowds who thronged the market were reacquainting themselves with an old friend, albeit one with a radical facelift.

Both the tunnel and the market will in their own way make the city centre a more pleasant environment. The Milk Market will now trade four days a week - with specialist markets on Thursdays - with longer opening hours and new stallholders.

"It's a lovely job and it has the feeling of those fantastic markets you get on the Continent. There has always been a great feeling to the Saturday market and hopefully we'll see that replicated every Friday and Sunday from now on," said Carmel

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Crowds throng the renovated Milk Market on Saturday morning, the first full day's trading since the redevelopment

PICTURES: GREG O'SHAUGHNESSY

# Milk market trades up with a new look

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Hayes, who had travelled in from Bruff for fish and olives.

Others weren't so sure what they were looking at.

"What in the name of God is the tent supposed to be? And where are our beautiful cobbles? They're after taking away the cobbles and putting down tiles instead and someone is going to break their neck," said Monica Hogan, who had come along with friends Jo Monahan and Rita Ward, all of whom had been coming to the market "since when they were still cutting the necks off the turkeys".

"In Limerick, we do everything a\*\*eways. Rutland Street and Patrick Street and Ellen Street are falling down. They might have done something with that part of town first. We didn't need this," added Monica.

But the ladies' chief complaint was that the tent was capturing too many of the market sounds.

"Too noisy, much too noisy. I wouldn't like to be here on a very windy day," said Ms Monahan.

Mercifully for the Milk Market Trustees, this was a minority view.

"I'm not sure if it's busier here today but it sure sounds that way," said Brian Irwin, Castletroy. "There has always been a great buzz to the market and the buzz is back but only more than before. It's a fabulous job."

**"The idea is for a multi-use space... We have Lyric FM just across the road and they are very keen to do live broadcasts from Limerick. We have people like the Chamber Orchestra here as well so there is great potential for live performances here,"**

**- Eoghan Prendergast**



The new layout of the milk market, minus the traders' vans, allows more space for shoppers and for stalls and permanent shops

PICTURE: LIAM BURKE



Grace Prendergast (9), Ennis Road at the reopening

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Olivier Beaujohn finds the longer opening hours a little tougher since he has to come from Castlegregory, but he says it is only a small complaint. He enjoyed the atmosphere on Saturday morning

PICTURE: GREG O'SHAUGHNESSY



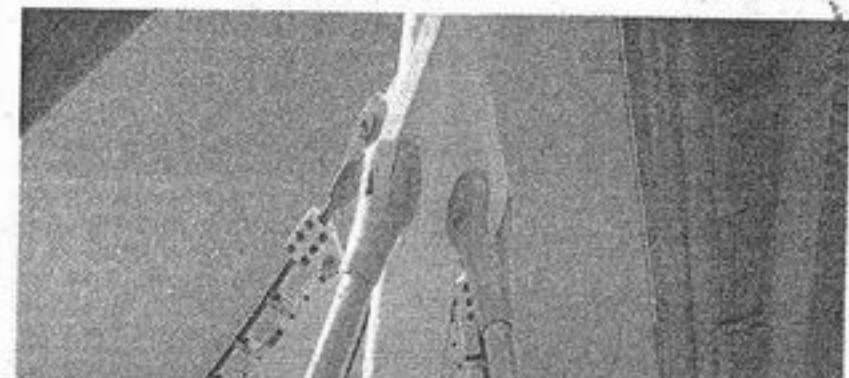
Evie and Liza Ward working at the Country Choice stand in the newly renovated Limerick Milk Market last Saturday morning

PICTURE: BOBBY POWER



The mushroom stand was doing a brisk trade last Saturday morning at the newly renovated Milk Market in Limerick

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people like the Chamber Orchestra here as well so there is great potential for live performances here," Mr Prendergast said.

If the canopy brings the market an all-new look, its new sound is just as deliberate, explained Michael Healy, whose association with the market goes as far back as a thesis he did in 1979.

"The sound is contained. We found that before, the sound of Saturday mornings dissipated. But with this tensile structure, we can contain some of that and it all adds to the atmosphere with all that clatter-clatter and hubbub."

"We worked with Schlaich Bergemann, a German firm of internationally renowned engineers, and worked with them from the conception of the tensile structure down to the very fine detail of the individual stalls. And it's great to see here this morning all the buzz is back, with the great tradition we have in Limerick of the country and city people meeting one another," Mr Healy said.

With the new market have come new rules. The tent is non-smoking and traders can no longer keep their vans inside the walls. But that's not necessarily a bad thing,



**Watch a video feature on the milk market on Limerick Leader TV at [www.limerickleader.ie](http://www.limerickleader.ie)**



Val O'Connor speaks with market redevelopment co-ordinator Chris O'Connor and Jan O'Sullivan TD for Limerick Leader TV

PICTURES: TONY CLANCY



said David McCaffrey of the Limerick-based Sallymills Bakery.

"Initially, people had concerns we would have to bring in the vans, unload and get them out but we had the full market set up and ready to go by 8am this morning and that was only day one. That's down to the fact that each trader took it upon themselves to try and organise a bit better because they knew they had to get rid of the van. But the upside is once we get rid of the vans, the aisle widths are wider, congestion is less and there are more stalls," Mr McCaffrey said.

While some complained the roof made the place darker, Mr Healy explained the canopy was translucent to retain an open-air character

to the covered market.

And Mr McCaffrey had no complaints on that score either.

"I know looking at it from the outside people had their doubts about it but once you get inside, the atmosphere it generates is fantastic and the way the light filters through is brilliant. And of course, it's all-weather which is a bonus," he said.

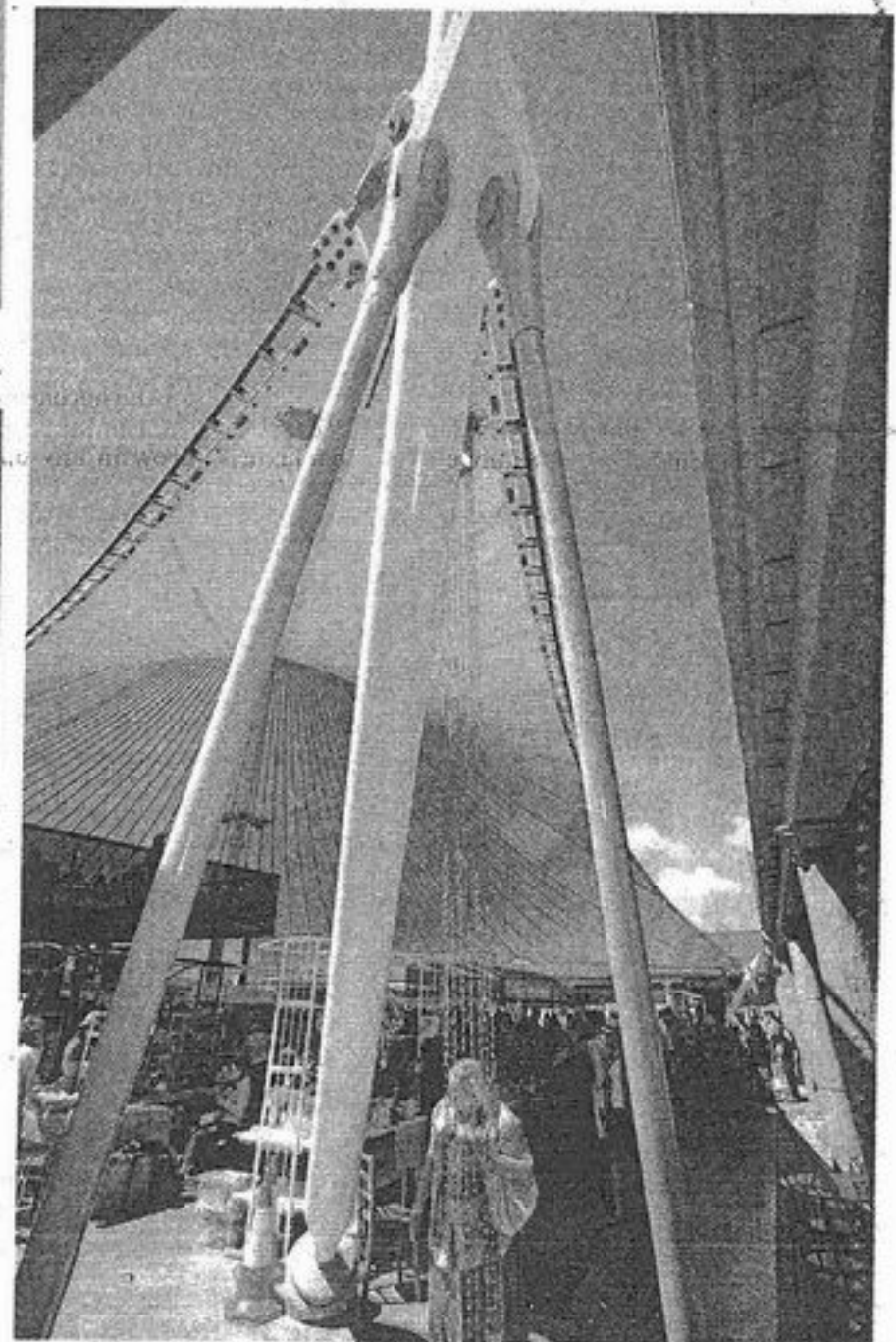
"The main point is we have new shops we can open all week long and make it a venue where people can come and have lunch or a coffee and sit down and relax. Rather than just being a Saturday market, it's a lot more now so we'll be here Fridays, Sundays, bank holiday Mondays and we will expand it out

Mondays to Thursdays ultimately as well.

"The pavilion units and perimeter units will be open on a permanent basis. And we'll have specialist markets coming in on Thursdays."

For example, the National Arts and Crafts Council have it booked it already every Thursday once a month for the next 12 months. Arts and crafts from all around the country are on their way and they have every single stall booked out already.

"It's great for the inner city. The way it is surrounded now with retail parks, it needed something new. Now here we have it. This is the start of something new."



An exterior view of the huge new canopy that will keep the rain out

PICTURE: GREG O'SHAUGHNESSY