

LIMERICK LEADER

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90p

Close del ction

were claiming damages in a personal injury claim after an accident. John O'Sullivan, BL, for Ms Griffin and Mr Burke (instructed by Ger O'Neill, solicitor) claimed that the report was "inaccurate" in that it reported Judge Michael Moriarty as saying that the plaintiffs were "turning litigation into a cottage industry", when, in fact, according to Mr O'Sullivan, the judge prefaced that with a negative.

Mr O'Sullivan told the court that the report caused tremendous upset and held Ms Griffin and Mr Burke up to public odium.

Ms Griffin told the court that she is separated from her husband and lives with Thomas Burke.

In April 1994, Ms Griffin said, she and Mr Burke were plaintiffs

in a personal injury claim after a road traffic accident.

The judge made his decision and the case was reported in the Limerick Leader. She did not become aware of anything after the case until a friend phoned her and told her to get the Limerick Leader because there were "terrible things" in it about her. On reading the article, Ms Griffin said she did not recall the judge saying anything about "turning litigation into a cottage industry".

Ms Griffin said other people also adverted to that remark. "I was upset about it. It was not true," she said. She told the court that she was looking for a job and that her brother had told her she would not get a job.

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'Angela's Ashes' flare up in city controversy

PULITZER Prize winner Frank McCourt exaggerated his childhood poverty in international bestseller *Angela's Ashes*, according to several people who grew up in the era, and who remember the lanes of Limerick.

"I don't believe that poverty ever existed," said barber Eddie Morrissey, who grew up on Joseph Street, and who knew Frank's three brothers, Malachy, Alfie, and Michael.

"But the fact that his father was a chronic alcoholic might have caused some of his problems."

Ald John Gilligan agreed with this assessment, sparking off a debate when he appeared on the Pat Kenny Show on RTE-1 this Thursday morning, claiming that Limerick did not suffer the poverty depicted in *Angela's Ashes*.

He said the book was not a fair depiction of Limerick in the thirties and forties.

Mr Morrissey said: "I don't remember his early days on Windmill Street, but they were as well off as any of us in the lanes. There was a lot of work on the docks, and the family lived reasonably well."

"Things were relatively good. Everyone was in the same situation. Most of that side of Limerick were fed by offal, packet and tripe, and rabbit."

"With half a crown you'd feed half the road."

"There was an abundance of cheap, good food. I would say he has exaggerated conditions."



Frank McCourt: Tinted view?

□ See also P4

"I think that when he started the book he wanted to write about the things that hurt him. But I don't believe times were as rough as he wrote."

"I've discussed this with people who grew up with them, and they say that the McCourts were okay."

He added that TB was rife in the thirties, yet none of the McCourts succumbed to the disease.

Mr Morrissey dismissed claims that Frank McCourt's father would have been discriminated against because of his Northern origins.

"The confraternity was very strong in those days, and had a terrible influence as regards jobs but if his father was a Catholic he would have had no problems."

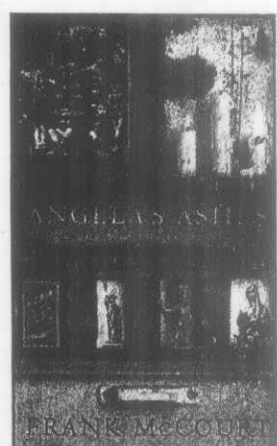
I wouldn't think it would have been held against his father that he was from Northern Ireland.

"But Frank has put his story together well, and fair play to him for that." JIMMY WOLFE reports: The split in public opinion over *Angela's Ashes* has spread to the City Council.

Alderman Gilligan described the book as a "total and absolute work of fiction."

Ald Jim Kemmy and Cllr Jack Bourke have dismissed Ald Gilligan's assessment that the book is a total and absolute work of fiction.

Said Cllr Bourke: "I read the book and enjoyed it immensely. It is a story told through the eyes of a very young child growing



The award-winning best-seller. (LL)

up and through his adolescence and the story of the McCourt family.

"But while they had a hard time in Limerick they had just as hard time in New York and it has got nothing to do with Limerick or New York, but the fact that their father, who everytime he had money spent it on booze."

Ald Gilligan said this week: "If your father was a chronic alcoholic you had absolutely nothing. It is time Frank McCourt faced this fact: that is why they were so poverty stricken, and so badly off. But they were no worse and no better than anybody else."

"It certainly did not look as if Limerick city at that stage had anything to do with what was in Frank McCourt's book."

Cllr Bourke pointed out that in the book the author went to great pains to describe how other families had proper Christmas dinners when all they had on that day was a pig's head.

● P2

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IGENE PHELAN

John Gilligan, who had over 1,000 votes in last local elections, decided not to run in the General Election—he hasn't the cash. He simply doesn't have the money to mount a campaign—it is as simple as that, he said this week. Gilligan camp reckoned it would take a minimum of £6,000 to run, and more. He was asked to run and while he didn't win a Dail, he certainly would have won votes from John Kimmy and Jan van in particular. "I would love to see Ben Dunne to fund it, I don't," joked the 60-year-old from "The

confirmed that he will in the next local elections which he will use

City spectacle

By DYMUNA BRACKEN

A THREE day street pageant spectacle with a cast of over 3,000 will be the Limerick Charter 800 launching pad for a permanent city street theatre group on the lines of Macnas in Galway.

The Limerick 2000+ initiative, which includes the Charter 800 programme under its promotion strategy for the city, has joined with FAS to set up a year-long employment and training programme which will bring the medieval era back to life in a series of street pageants over the July 4, 5, and 6 weekend.

Mammoth parades and processions will depict the arrival of the High King of Ireland and the Celtic chieftains on July 2; the entry of King John to the city will be re-enacted on July 5 and a great royal tournament will be staged on Sunday July 6.

Based on the historic events surrounding the granting of the city charter which made Limerick the



Breda O'Leary and Barry Gaynor rehearse at King John's Castle for the July pageant. (LL)

This summer festival centrepiece of the Charter 800 year will involve voluntary and other groups from throughout the city including scouts, guides and schools under the direction of the 30 people whose training has started this week under a FAS community employment scheme.

Thanks to the support from FAS and Limerick 2000+, the volunteer Umbrella Group street theatre company involving the Belltable, Corporation and the city VEC will get funding and training support to set up a permanent street theatre venture.

Brid Finn, who pioneered the Umbrella Group two years ago to add a new street spectacle dimension to the May Music Expo and other events, is supervisor of the 52-week FAS scheme which began training its first 11 recruits this week.

A total of 30 people will get training in street theatre skills, design and making of costumes and props and other special arts and crafts at a special headquarters



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Angela's Ashes

• P1

"He also made the point that very often when a father went to England, he never sent money back home. A lot of other fathers sent back money. "Ald Gilligan is taking the whole thing out of context. The book is the story of a boy telling something that happened to him in his lifetime. A father who couldn't keep money in his hand. It is a brilliant book."

"The family returned from New York because the father could not make it there, the greatest city in the world where there was work everywhere. Anybody who couldn't earn money there must have had something wrong with him. And his father was a sick man who was an alcoholic. "This is a disease," said Cllr Bourke.

He added: "I can't see any intelligent person saying Limerick was the most awful place in the entire world. What Ald Gilligan seems to be saying is that very few people have the brains to read it and realise that it is not a depiction of Limerick as it is today."

"Any intelligent person will read it as a narrative through the eyes of a child. The book should be seen for what it is, telling the story of one family," Ald Gilligan said that at that time most people were poor, but they actually survived.

"That is why it is a total and absolute work of fiction," claimed Ald Gilligan.

Deputy Kemmy, a close friend of the author, said that when the book was launched in Limerick it was the best attended book launch ever in the city.

"The author has been acclaimed throughout the world, his book has been translated into a number of languages; I feel this criticism is misguided. "Pulitzer Prizes are not given out to everybody. Instead of putting Limerick down, I think he is putting Limerick on the world map. Who would begrudge him that success?" said Alderman Kemmy.



Christine Cowhey, chairwoman, Accord Limerick, presents the first copy of the Dr Donal Murray, at the Accord offices, O'Connell Street Limerick, watched Margaret Dalton and Fr Joe Shire. □ See LEISURE.

Court frees jailed city drug runner

A LIMERICK MAN who was caught with £100,000 worth of ecstasy tablets has had the balance of his three-year sentence suspended by Dublin Circuit Criminal Court.

George Browne told gardai he would "get a bullet" if he named the Limerick "Mr Big" who organised the drug run in 1995.

He made a £150 taxi round-trip to collect the drug from a contact at a Dublin hotel.

The president of the circuit Court, Mr Frank Justice Spain imposed a three year sentence on June 12, 1996, and requested that Mr Browne get all necessary drug counselling while in custody.

Mr Justice Spain set the case down for review at this time and suspended the balance with Mr Browne remaining under the supervision of the Probation and Welfare Service.

Mr Browne (40) of St Patrick's Road, Limerick, pleaded guilty to possession of 4,418 tablets for sale or supply on April 7, 1995.

Gardai stopped the taxi at Castletroy and 200 of the tablets were found in a bag in his shirt pocket. Mr Browne pointed out another bag containing the rest of the drugs which he had hid-

den in the front passenger seat.

He said he was to be paid 200 tablets to collect the drugs for "Mr Big" in Limerick who had recruited him after he accrued debts as a result of the loss of his taxi-driver employment, a detective told Bruce Antoniotti, BL, prosecuting.

Mr Browne said he had abused ecstasy for a while but stopped because he believed it was a young person's drug.

The taxi driver was not involved in the crime, he added in a statement.

The haul would have been worth £100,000 in 1995, but the price per tablets had dropped since then, Ecstasy abuse was as much a problem in Limerick as it was in Dublin and other cities, the court heard.

Cuppa tea

THOUSANDS of Limerick people will pour a cup of tea on May 1 to help open a new centre for the Alzheimer Society in the city. The society already has a day care centre in Adare. Tea will be served at the Glentworth Hotel and the Civic Trust offices, and collections will be held at Dunne's Jetland store.

Threat of fight stops court

LIMERICK District Court had to be adjourned, this Thursday morning, as the third fight of the morning threatened to break out, inside the courtroom.

The Gardai explained to Judge Michael O'Leary that two people who were to be charged on the morning are involved in a long-standing feud in the St Mary's Park area.

At 10.15, the court heard, a fight involving several men broke out on the steps of the courthouse.

Again, at 10.25, five minutes before proceedings were due to start, two men started fighting just outside the courthouse.

And after about a half-an-hour of court proceedings, Judge O'Leary had to adjourn the court to allow gardai to remove from the court one of two groups of men who were calling abusively to each other.

When the state applied to remand two men who were involved in the incident in custody, the judge found that he was unable to do so as they were presently on bail, and the state could not fully prove them to be in breach of the conditions of bail, as they had not witnessed the full incident on the steps of the courthouse.

The two, John Ryan (41), of 68 Lee Estate, Limerick, and Kieran Collopy (21) of 38 St Ita's Street, Limerick, were remanded on continuing bail, and Judge O'Leary said, "I think we will just put it back and wait for further instalments on the pugilistic front."

He warned that anyone who wished to get involved in another punch-up, "may well find themselves in a different place for a few hours, or a few weeks".

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