

Author Darren honoured for fuelling the imagination of young readers

By PETULA MARTYN

BEST selling children's author Darren Shan has been awarded the Limerick Person of the Month Award for fuelling children's imagination with his fantasy stories.

The critically acclaimed writer has published 17 books to date, but fans of the Pallaskenry man will have to wait until October for his next book, the title of which is top secret.

Darren Shan, known locally in Pallaskenry as Darren O'Shaughnessy, adopted the name of one of his main characters following the success of Cirque du Freak.

He said he was delighted to be recognised for his work in Limerick, as Limerick has provided him with ideas and inspiration for some of his novels. Students at Copsewood College might recognise characters and situations from the secondary school in Darren's books.

"I write for teenagers," he told the Limerick Leader. "I often think of the people I knew when I was in school and how they acted and talked. I've used names of teachers in some of the books as well, but, hopefully, I've written nothing libellous."

The children's author accepted the award which is sponsored by the Limerick Leader, the Clarion



Author Darren Shan, Pallaskenry, receives his Limerick person of the month award from Dave O'Hara, Southern Advertising, sponsors, watched by Petula Martyn, Limerick leader editor, sponsors, and Sean Lally, general manager, Clarion Hotel, sponsors

Hotel and Southern Advertising this week, saying it was lovely to be acknowledged locally.

Darren tries to reciprocate the good wishes he receives from the West Limerick community by attending readings in the school or library at least twice a year.

He has been living in Pallaskenry for almost 30 years, and is proud of his County Limerick heritage. Darren's father, Liam O'Shaughnessy, played gaelic football for Limerick, and his grandfather, John Barry, won All-Ireland junior medals for his county. Despite the sporting history, Darren Shan does not have a tick-

et for this weekend's All-Ireland final, but is looking forward to a Limerick win.

Comparisons are often made between Darren's work and that of JK Rowling. The thirtysomething author does not mind the comparisons and generously credits the Harry Potter series of books with "making it easier for children's authors to get more recognition and sell more copies".

He said: "I don't think anyone can fill the gap left by Harry Potter, but I don't think there is a gap to be filled because it is a one-off. Harry Potter is a phenomenon that cannot

be replaced." According to the Pallaskenry resident, children's books have always suffered from a lack of media awareness, but Harry Potter changed all of that.

Darren is Limerick's answer to JK Rowling and like the famed children's author, Darren enjoys his success quietly.

"I lead a quiet life. I'm not very flashy. I don't go out drinking a lot. I just do things I've always done before the books were successful."

The writer loves movies and has a massive film collection in his County Limerick home.



At Milford Care Centre for the launch of Milford Harvest Fair, from left; Mike O'Brien, Eamon Ryan fair committee chairman; Jim Doherty, fundraising committee chairman

Milford is set to reap f

By DONAL O'REGAN

OVER the next two Sundays, Limerick has a couple of events not to be missed. First up is the All-Ireland final, and the following Sunday, September 9, is the Harvest Fair at Milford Care Centre.

The fair turns 22 this year, but it shows no sign of stopping growing. Every year, over 20,000 people attend the fair, and George Lee, volunteer co-

ordinator, said that steps were under way to make this year's one of the best ever.

"We have a new rodeo bull and we guarantee that all funds lassoed at Milford Harvest Fair will, as usual, go directly into the provision and extension of hospice services for the people of the Mid-West. We also have all the usual novelty items from the wheel of fortune through to the bottle stall and penalty kicks. This

year will incorporate a newly-designed site layout incorporating a kiddies' corner with many innovative and proven displays and events," he said.

Fair chairman Eamon Ryan, and chief executive Pat Quinlan, officially launched the event and Mr Quinlan pointed to the new €11.3m capital development.

"This will support the expansion of palliative care both at Milford and

in the which tre rail Mr Qu He capital been Health and th approx be me fundir grant McMa ty Ev from tre's o

Foynes could see a new fl

By NORMA PRENDIVILLE

THE golden era of flying boats in Foynes may be about to return if plans by Fermanagh-based pilot and businessman, Steve Powell shape up.

Mr Powell, who is involved with the Amphibious Flying Club in Enniskillen, intends to fly his small, three-seater Maule seaplane into

Foynes later this year as part of a search and reconnaissance trip of suitable locations around Ireland.

Mr Powell's plan is to set up a seaplane service operating within Ireland though he hasn't ruled out running a service to Britain either.

"We have got an aircraft we are using at the moment and we are going around all the suitable sites and locations to

make sure it is feasible," he told the Limerick Leader.

Getting around Ireland can be time consuming by road, he pointed out, and he believes a seaplane operation utilising the country's lakes, estuaries and waterways could be an attractive option.

"There is so much water in Ireland with towns and hotels nearby, we think it would be a really good business to do

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BellX1 boy Geraghty flies solo with a Limerick gig

By SAMANTHA NOVICK

KILDARE popsters BellX1 may be keeping out of the limelight after 2005's number one album Flock, but that doesn't mean the band members have been taking it easy.

After a well-received single Fear The Hitcher, guitarist and sometime vocalist David Geraghty will release his solo album Kill Your Darlings on September 7.

David has obviously relished the chance to show his music mettle,



Med stud piqued by

By ANNE SHERIDAN

THE Ulster Bank branch at the city of Limerick have set up a low cost loan package for students at the university's graduate entry school next week.

Thirty Irish students, as well international students, will begin orientation week at the university Monday, September 3.

Fees to enroll for the four-year medical school have been €12,000 per year, by the Higher Education Authority, which they have are "not excessive."

Jane Sweetman, HEA, told the Limerick Leader. "Both institutions offering student loans at part favourable rates and students eligible for tax relief. Other