

## Mean Streets: Lost Limerick lives and broken communities

Petula Martyn

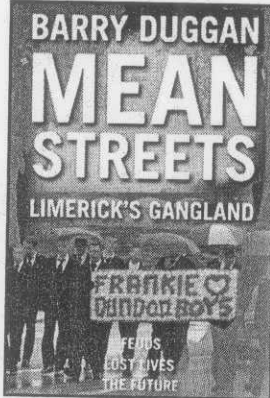
LIMERICK State solicitor Michael Murray believes the Government has let down Limerick city by failing to quickly implement the policing measures called for in the John Fitzgerald Report published in 2007.

The chairman of the Limerick Regeneration Agencies sought the immediate deployment of 100 extra gardai to be specifically allocated to disadvantaged estates in Limerick.

However, according to Mr Murray: "Garda management has been forced by different political forces to devote resources in a way that has resulted in a diminution of resources in the fight against crime."

In a new book by journalist Barry Duggan entitled *Mean Streets*, Mr Murray concedes that considerable additional resources have been provided but that "political control in the way in which we police our state has not helped".

The city's State solicitor, who has almost 30 years experience in his position, pointed to the "beefed up" divisional traffic corps in Limerick which has 40 members, and compared it to the significantly lower



Mean Streets, the new book by Barry Duggan

number of personnel assigned to the divisional drugs squad which he said has been "decimated".

"Road traffic enforcement has become huge on the political agenda and it is an area that requires attention, but when you see it getting more attention than the drugs scene in Limerick, you begin to wonder, who has lost the plot," Mr Murray said if the State does not win the battle against the gangs, the city could have a much worse problem in ten years' time "where not only will the battle be lost, but the war will be lost".

Mr Murray has intimate knowledge of the crime problems facing Limerick

and his insight on this issue, which features in Mr Duggan's book, cannot be dismissed.

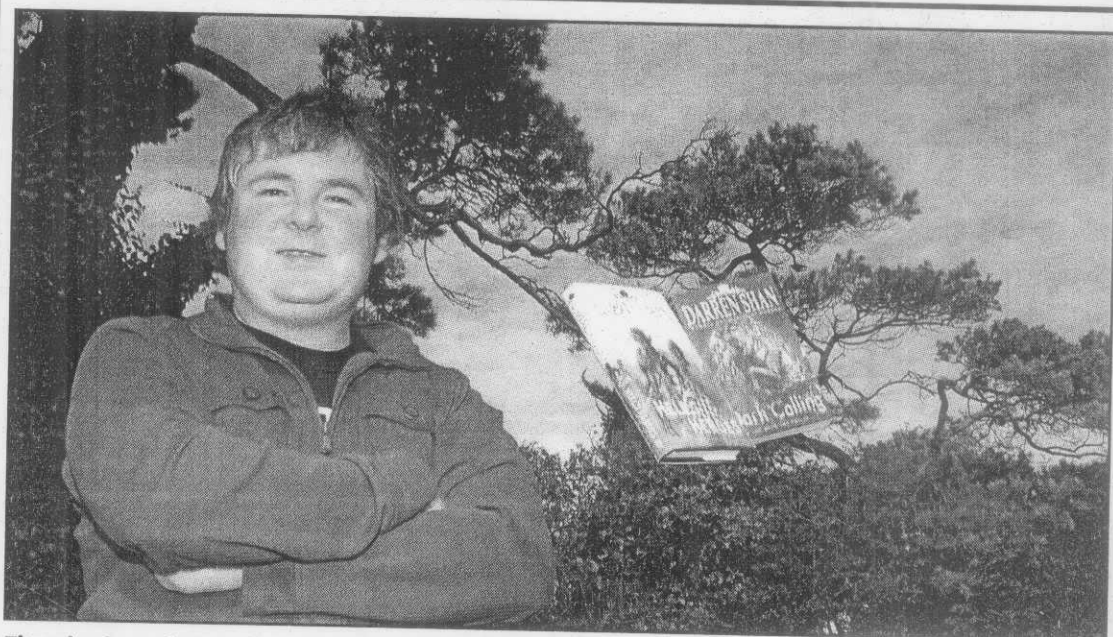
Especially as it comes in the closing chapter of a book which focuses on gangland crime while also looking at the promise of Regeneration.

*Mean Streets* documents the emergence of the Keane/Collopy gang on Limerick's northside and their feud with the Ryans. The book outlines how this feud escalated out of control, leaving a trail of death and destruction, when the Dundon-McCarthy gang arrived in Limerick at the turn of the century and aligned themselves with the Ryans.

Most Limerick people will know the names and events from media reports but others who live in the disadvantaged estates occupied by these gangs are even more familiar with the thugs who have destroyed their neighbourhoods.

The stories of lost lives and broken communities are captured brilliantly in Mr Duggan's book which also analyses the potential and pitfalls of Regeneration.

*Mean Streets: Limerick's Gangland* is now available in bookshops, priced at €11.99.



These books are just magic ... author Darren Shan at home in Pallaskenry

PICTURE: OWEN SOUTH

## Darren's premiere dream comes true

Eugene Phelan

LOCAL author Darren Shan, who has sold 15 million books worldwide, will fulfil a lifetime ambition on Tuesday next, October 13, when he attends the premier of a film based on his writings in Limerick. "It was a dream of mine, many years ago, that if a film ever got made of my books, that I would love for the premiere to take place in Limerick, at my local cinema, where I've been going to films for as long as I can remember. And guess what dreams do come true," said Darren.

It is the first time an Irish premiere has taken place outside of Dublin and promises to be a massive event for Limerick.

Darren (O'Shaughnessy) who was born in London has lived virtually all his life in Pallaskenry and went to school in Askeaton and the Salesians College. He is definitely an expert when it comes to vampires, having written over 12 books on that subject alone.

His books are on sale in every continent, in 39 countries, in 31 languages, and have been children's bestsellers in America, Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and many other countries. The books have topped adult bestseller charts in Hungary, Japan and Taiwan.

Darren's children's books have been bestsellers the world over and now Universal Pictures are ready to release *Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant*, which is based on the *Cirque du Freak* series of books. The launch will be held in the Omniplex cinema in the Crescent Shopping Centre but most fans will have to wait until October 23 for the general release of the film.

And those lucky enough to get invited to the premiere - or win our competition see below for details - will also be able to take part in a question and answer session after the film.

It is rare for Limerick to get a film premiere but it is all down to what the author wanted. The launch has been organised in association with Eason's Book shop.

*Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant* is a fantasy-adventure about a teenager who unknowingly breaks a 200-year-old truce between two warring factions of vampires. Pulled into a fantastic



Fantastic ... Darren with two of his biggest fans, Tara Sheehan and Chloe Shinnors at a recent book signing in O'Mahony's bookshop

life of misunderstood sideshow freaks and grotesque creatures of the night, one teen will vanish from the safety of a boring existence and fulfil his destiny in a place drawn from nightmares. "One of the first public showings world-wide is going to be at the Omniplex Limerick."

"I've been going to the Omniplex ever since it opened so I'm delighted that we've been able to make this work. This will be as special for me as it will hopefully be for everyone else who comes," said Darren. And he added: "I can't wait to share the pleasure of watching it with a group of hardcore, blood-thirsty fans".

Universal pictures boss, Dave Burke, is also excited about the prospects for the film: "We are incredibly proud to be working on this unique and exciting film and look forward to its nationwide release on October 23."

Although Darren always wanted to be a writer, it was only in his teenage years that he began writing in his spare time for fun (before that, he only wrote stories if they were for homework).

He bought his first typewriter when he was 14, and never looked back, knocking out loads of short stories and comic scripts, and making false starts on several books, which he never completed. He enjoyed his first taste of literary success at age 15, as a runner-up in a television script-writing competition for RTE in Ireland, with a dark comedy script titled *A Day in*

the Morgue. In January 2000, his first children's book, *Cirque du Freak*, which he'd written as a fun side-project, was published. The first book in a series titled *The Saga of Darren Shan* (or *Cirque du Freak*, as it's known in America), it attracted rave reviews and an ever-growing army of fans hungry to learn more about vampires which were quite unlike any that anyone had ever seen before!

Darren has now returned to his first love and is once again writing for adults as well. He has had two adult books published in the UK, *Procession of the Dead* and *Hell's Horizon*.

They have been released in a number of other countries too, and are due to hit the USA in 2010. A third, *City of the Snakes*, goes on sale in the UK in March 2010.

DO you want to be one of the invited guests at the Irish premiere of the Universal Pictures movie, *Cirque Du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant*, the highly anticipated feature film based on the "Cirque Du Freak" series of books by best selling Irish author Darren Shan? If you fancy going, then get this weekend's edition of the Limerick Leader where you can enter a competition to win tickets for the premiere. The premiere will take place in the Omniplex, Limerick on October 13 at 7pm.



Chernobyl Children's Project International



## OPEN NIGHT

Become a Host Family With The Chernobyl Children's Project



Every year the Limerick branch of the Chernobyl Children's Project provides much needed summer holidays in loving homes to children worst affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Limerick families have shown enormous generosity over the years through taking children out of their contaminated & in many cases poverty stricken environments & providing fun filled, warm & loving experiences to those much less fortunate than ourselves.

These rest & recuperation holidays provide enormous health benefits to the children through exposure to fresh air, healthy food, exercise & of course warm & caring hospitality.

If you are interested in hosting children or would simply like to find out more about the project come along to our open night:

THURSDAY OCTOBER 8TH @ 8.30PM  
THE ABSOLUTE HOTEL  
SIR HARRY'S MALL LIMERICK

For Any Other Queries Contact Anthony Sheehan  
On 0868151272