

# The Men

Seamus O'Rourke

'THANKS BE to God'... and that was it, mass was over... the forty minutes of saying nothing apart from our prayers was up... and first up were the Carrigallens... up and away out the door before the choir mistress could say 'Like a bat outa Hell'... The Carrigallen ones, who had driven all of three miles to join our primitive proceedings, the Carrigallen ones who had always presumed the out-back of Drumeela to have less oxygen, less civilization and a lot less shopping options once mass had finished... They had arrived late, almost out of breath, as if they had hacked their way through overgrown byways to get there... They strategically parked their cars for the quick get-away and get away quick they did... and not much loss... what loss

was it that the Carrigallen ones were gone when we came out from mass... if they didn't get away, they'd only be hanging around, making small talk, trying to say the right thing and laughing for no reason... trying to fit in with the savages... townies with rosary beads and no manners, only coming to our ten o'clock mass, because first mass in Carrigallen was too early and second mass was too drawn out... far handier to throw a coat on them and spin out to Drumeela and preserve their catholic status, yet avoid the handling fee... yes... when the collection basket came round, the Carrigallen ones would hold it for a minute, put on their confused face and wonder why there was no slot for the Visa card and then simply pass it on... and

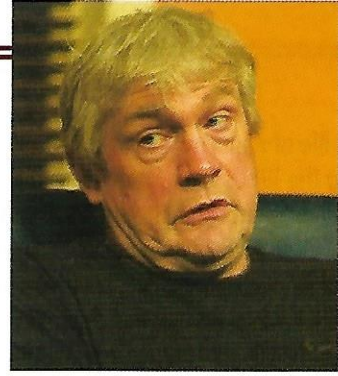
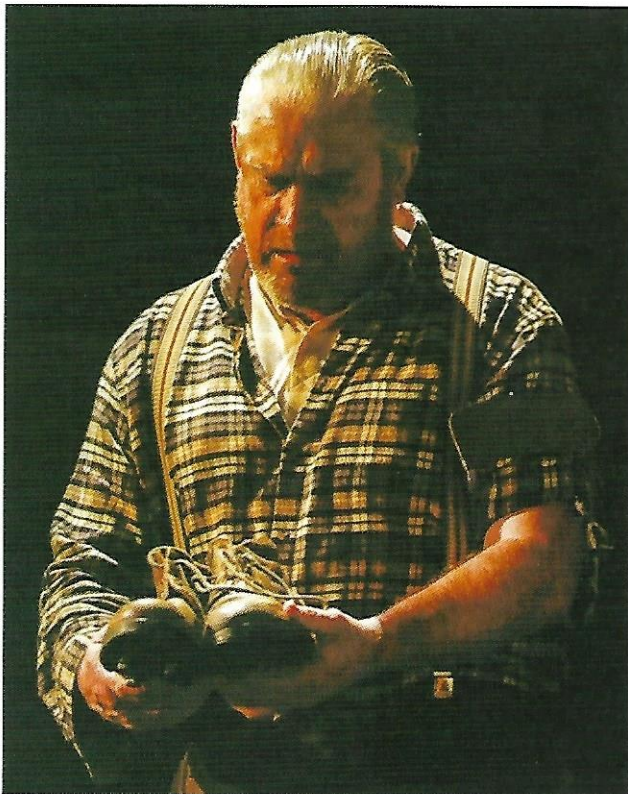
when they heard 'mass is ended, go forth in peace to love and serve the lord'... They'd be saying their 'Thanks be to God' on the way out the door and we'd be saying 'Thanks be to God' too as their coat tails flew down the aisle... like a bat out of hell is right... and good riddance...

The townies could never understand our ways... all blasé about community and sense of place...

but this was our place, our once a week social gathering... this was our glue... not about prayers or religion or gospels, although we said our prayers and we had our religion, but as for the gospels... well, they were just stories... and not a patch on the stories that Benny Reilly could tell or auld McCartin... or Edward Keirnan or Micky O'Brien or Tom McCart and when we were small boys, we stood with the 'men' after mass, clung on to our Daddy's coats and listened to every word and learned the art of storytelling... how to set them up, how to add the intrigue, how to move them on... and then how to nail that final punchline... the amphitheatre of those Drumeela drumlins echoed every Sunday morning with guffaws of laughter and bewilderment as the stories and good ones of the day... finally came afloat.

Eventually we young fellas would let go of Daddy's coat and form our own clusters, our own brand of the Drumeela raconteur... until it was like rival gangs outside of mass... at the side of the church or at the gates or along the Drumbrick road... This was 'the men' after mass of a Sunday in Drumeela back in the early eighties... county men and county councillors, the IFA's and the MEP, the campaigners and the conspirators... the Macra crowd and the football crowd... the pioneers and the pasty faced brothers who weren't long home from one of them new disco places.

And where were the women





■ **The Men**— Tommy McCart, Eamonn Kiernan, Michael Lee, Edmund Patterson, Pat Fitzpatrick, Tosh O'Rourke, Declan Moran & Paul McGerty *Photo: Tommy Moran*

when all this was going on? Putting up with, what else? The men had the keys of the car, but the car was open and if the women wanted to sit in and wait, they could... or they could admire each other or talk about flowers... they could go in and see the priest or light candles or hold hands or whisper about woman things... or they could always revert to option A... sit in the car and wait... but never tell a man

to hurry and him in the middle of a good story... and so the men talked and lies got told... and the yarns were spun... Stories... elongated when the weather was fair or briskly tied with the threat of rain... a tapestry of rural Ireland at the time, ignorant and blissful in equal measure... and then the years edged on and the after mass crowd, one by one disappeared... but across the wall in the graveyard... the new-fangled FAS

scheme cleared pathways and mowed, so that we could once again hold our weekly conversation with 'the men'... the men, who had laughed and roared and guffawed and thought us an unlikely trade, that somehow shaped our alternate lives... The Men.

*Seamus O'Rourke is a writer, director and actor... and an independent producer with his own company BIG GUERRILLA PRODUCTIONS. As a writer, his plays include 'Ride On' 'dig',*

*'Down', 'The Trappe Family', 'Stale Mate', 'For Club and County', 'Victor's Dung', 'My Aunt Bee' and his three One-Man-Shows, 'The Sand Park', 'Padraig Potts' Guide to Walking' and INDIGESTION... (See Posters below). He opens his new play 'From Under the Bed' in Jan 2018 at the Viking Theatre, Dublin.*

*Seamus has performed his poetry on RTE television and Radio and has well over a million hits on YouTube and Social Media with his short stories, recitations and sketches.*

present  
Seamus O'Rourke's  
Award winning play  
**dig**

**INDIGESTION**  
I'm gone tell up a story  
A simple tough story  
full of  
**HOPE**

**Padraig Potts' Guide to Walking**

**THE SAND PARK**

**VICTOR'S DUNG**  
The whole story  
Written and Directed by Seamus O'Rourke  
with Tommy Sharkey and Charles McGuinness  
FUNNY \* BAD \* MAD \* EXCITING

**A Simple Man**  
A Simple story  
A Story full of  
**HOPE**

**RIDE ON!**  
The struggle  
the Great  
Struggle  
Bun  
A PLAY BY SEAMUS O'ROURKE

**THE TRAPPE FAMILY**

**fringe** BIG GUERRILLA PRODUCTIONS  
A Play  
Written and Directed by  
Seamus O'Rourke  
Directed by Charlie McGuinness

**INDIGESTION**  
by Seamus O'Rourke  
THE NEWGRANGE HOTEL NAVAN  
in aid of Navan Badminton Club  
SATURDAY 17TH OCTOBER

**DOWN**

2018 Leitrim Guardian 9