

# Nenagh writer pens black satire for debut novel

By Simon O'Duffy

Not wanting to be outdone by his father, Nenagh based writer Nick Brooke has just published a debut novel of his own in the form of riveting black satire *New Head on the Block*.

Nick Brooke is a son of Nenagh's Church of Ireland rector Rev Marie Rowley-Brooke and her husband Patrick, retired RAF engineer and musical director with the Nenagh CBS Band.

Last December Nick launched his first book courtesy of Austin & Macauley Publishers in the UK. Entitled *New Head on the Block*, the novel is a fictional comedy about a 'chav' lottery winner called AJ who moves to a secluded close and upsets the fragile balance between his new neighbours.

A young delinquent from a working class background, AJ faces a battle that he takes up with will against his neighbours, who include an initially friendly ultra Christian family, a downright hostile retired Major, ambitious Kathi, 'artist' Ralph and rich boy Jack. This potentially lethal cocktail of cultures leads AJ into catastrophic and hilarious situations, in which even the dogs got a look in, as our chav's enormous and illegal Viera and the Major's Yorkie, Betsy come to grips with the action.

Nick says the inspiration for his book came from working the graveyard shift at BMW's factory in Oxford, where he spent countless nights assembling Minis as a factory flood hand. Boring, tedious work, it caused Nick's mind to wander and come back with ideas for some great stories, including the content of

*New Head on the Block*.

The story he says contains a lot of "factory humour" and really deals with stereotypical characters and their preconceived prejudices against one another. They are all rich, but rags to riches AJ is of course seen as a very undesirable addition to the exclusive close, and in this regard the unfolding tale finds a whimsical play on the UK's chav phenomenon.

In his book, Nick says he wanted to throw these stereotyped characters into a closed environment to see how they get along. The result is as predictably disastrous as it is comic, but in the end one of the residents comes through with a modern view of the situation and ends up helping AJ along in an interesting subplot to the story.

Completed in about nine months, *New Head on the Block* sees Nick following in the footsteps of his father Patrick, who published his first novel, *Payback* a few years ago. Father and son have plenty of ideas for other stories and both hope to publish a second book in the not too distant future.

Nick's debut was snapped up when he launched it at a signing in Oxford last month and it continues to sell well in the UK. It is now available in Nenagh, where he helps out in Bookends on Abbey St with Marjorie Querton, who Nick wished to acknowledge for her encouragement in writing his first book.

*New Head on the Block* is now available at The Book Shop on Friar St, Nenagh, priced €11.99.



Nenagh writer Nick Brooke's first novel *New Head on the Block* is now available at The Book Shop. Photograph by Bridget Delaney