BEGINNER’S PLUCK

Brian Coughlan

After his degree in science, Brian specialised in pharmaceuticals, and has been working in the sector ever since.

“I worked for GlaxoSmithKlein in Cork for many years, and then moved to Mylan in Galway.”

Brian started writing some time ago. “I wrote a couple of very bad novels — not realising they were bad. I sent them out and they got rejected and I didn’t know why.”

In 2011, following an evening class in creative writing, Brian turned to short stories. “I’ve always liked the form, and when I started to get into it, I realised how much you can do with them.”

He’d had a couple of stories published in literary journals, when he took an MA in screenwriting. “It was a wonderful year. Screenwriting is great for getting your head around how to structure and create storylines.”

Afterwards, Brian returned to short stories, getting more published. “And when I had enough amassed, I thought I’d try my luck with a collection. I sent it to 100 publishers, more in hope than expectation, and the editor at Etruscan Press loved it. He said he kept coming back to it, laughing over it, and enjoying it. He got back to me within a month.”

Who is Brian Coughlan?

Date/place of birth: 1977/Navan, Co Meath.
Education: St Patrick’s Classical School. Trinity College Dublin; Science. DIT; MA Pharmaceutical Quality Assurance, NUI Galway, MA.

Sue Leonard

Screenwriting.
Home: Galway.
Family: Wife and son, 17.
The day job: Regulatory Affairs for the pharmaceutical company Mylan.
In another life: “I’d love to be a talented film director.”
Favourite writers: Joyce Carol Oates; John Hawkes; Billy O’Callaghan; Tadhg Coakley; Alan Mcoonagle; Flann O’Brien.
Second book: “I have a novel knocking around.”
Top tip: “I think the a-little-bit-everyday approach is better than saving up effort and attacking it. I write for an hour every day.”
Twitter: @littlecoughlan

The debut
Wattle and Daub, €14.96
In this diverse, zany collection, a terminally ill man tries everything to get well — but can’t quite quit smoking. A woman is driven mad by rodents in the walls. Some long lost schoolfriends, visiting late at night, cause disruption and chaos.
The verdict: These 22 punchy short stories never fail to surprise.