



# Having had a thin time of it for far too long, Gerry makes a head start on cure for baldness

Ahead of his BBC NI documentary tonight, broadcaster **Gerry Anderson** tells why hair loss has driven some men, including his actor pal Jimmy Nesbitt, to some extraordinary measures

Nothing is more certain to strike terror into the heart of a man in his early 20s than the creeping realisation that he may be losing his hair. Those early signs — the over-populated hairbrush, the blocked shower drain, many lonely strands clinging to the sides of the bath — all point to the sinister inevitability of a young life blighted by a thinning barnet. Think of what our victim imagines this fate entails.

He is certain that women will no longer fancy him. He senses that his friends may silently snigger and point when his back is turned.

In addition, he will eventually learn that only those with luxuriant thatches will loudly point out that his is wearing thin (those in the same baldy boat always keep schtum).

He will therefore quickly learn about the quintessential cruelty of man. This is because we are somehow conditioned to believe that a balding pate makes us less of a man.

How this ever came about no one is sure.

I blame Samson myself.

I know that cutting hair off isn't the same thing as balding but somehow the thought that a man is rendered weak because he has less hair seems to spring from that particular source. Samson was first balded, then blinded. He probably figured the first was

worst.

But if that newly-thinning young man is reading this, let him take comfort from the news that he can now do something about his receding hairline, something that will definitely work.

There was a time (and I speak of no more than a decade ago) when a balding man with all the money in the world couldn't get his hair back (wigs don't count, as will be discussed later).

I give you Elton John. Nobody had more money than he and nobody looked more stupid as he laboured and sweated under a wide variety of ever-elaborate solutions, all abysmal failures.

Then, as you do, he had a baby and gave up. But now look around you. Look at Jimmy Nesbitt, Louis Walsh, Rob Brydon and everybody who's ever been on a television judging panel. A hundred others. Transplanted to a man. All ace barnets miraculously sprouted in areas that were fallow before.

There are other names that would astound you but my lips must necessarily remain sealed.

It was in St Eugene's Cathedral choir in Stroke City when I was a boy and one of our greatest pleasures was staring down at the congregation from the lofty choir eyrie in a bid to ascertain which of us could spot the most wigs. I once counted eight definites, two probables and a solitary possible.

And this is Derry/Londonderry, not exactly the most affluent place in the world. But we had wigs,

cheap wigs, and vain, fearless men who wore them. These cheap hair-pieces weren't difficult to spot. For a start, they were usually not the same colour as the hair that could be spotted lurking down a carelessly protruding sideburn, and secondly, the hair stuck straight out at the back of the collar, like a duck's arse.

And I am sure that those men fell into the trap that awaits the wearers of wigs, a trap into which they usually plunge — the trap that enables them to believe that nobody notices.

I write this to prepare the way for the news that bald men need never be bald again, provided they have a shekel or two to spare.

I have seen the future and it is the hair transplant. The fruit of my labours can be seen in a documentary on BBC NI tonight.

It's called 'Gerry Anderson's Losing It' and it is necessarily autobiographical.

In a bold quest for the hirsute truth, I have travelled extensively in America, to New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and sundry points in between, to talk to the world's greatest authorities on hair replacement procedures and research.

My eyes were opened and my follicles were often rattled. Americans, of course, God love them, always take things a step further.

The oddest solution to male baldness I came across was in Los Angeles where a gentleman and his many cohorts eke out a tidy living by tattooing the heads of bald

men. To what possible end, I hear some of you ask.

Well, now we're getting down to something entirely different. It seems that, in Los Angeles, men will pay \$5,000 a pop to have their heads tattooed to look as if they have the equivalent of a 5 o'clock shadow on their skulls.

They wish to convey the impression that they could grow a full head of hair if they so desired but have shaved it off because they couldn't be bothered grooming or looking after it. I met a few of these men in the salon. They are strange people.

I thought, this could pass for a bouncer factory.

In New York, I met Joseph Paris (probably not his real name) who, for decades, made and looked after Frank Sinatra's wigs at home and on tour.

He proudly showed me a cabinet containing eight of Frank's wigs worn at different stages in the singer's life.

They grey gradually to a dull white. It looked to me like a display of senior citizen scalps, or, alternatively, a family of culled badgers.

As I write this, I have by my side, a Laser Cap, \$5,000 worth of jiggery-pokery that is basically a laser light system that can be concealed under a baseball cap, the wearer's skull being covertly bombarded by rays as he goes about his daily business.

This allegedly halts hair loss but cannot restore. It also gifts the wearer a very hot head. I also talked to a man who will give me hair by setting a robot on me. I wisely passed. I talked to another scientist who is doing sterling work with bald mice. And so it goes on.

The most plausible hair transplant man I could find was discovered on our own doorstep.

Dr Maurice Collins runs Hair Restoration Blacrock in Dublin, a state-of-the-art facility that has catered for the needs of Jimmy Nesbitt (who gamely appears in the programme) and most of the names mentioned above.

He has the gravitas and quiet charm of a man who knows what he's doing. If you want to find out what exactly it is that he does, watch the programme.

Those who know me will be aware that I have been gently thinning for years and, indeed, that is why I involved myself in this documentary, put together by our best film-maker, the award-winning Alison Millar who runs television production company Erica Starling.

I embarked on the film with the notion that I might even have a crack at a hair transplant myself if I thought that it would be a step forward (or backwards,

if you like) I found out that the procedure does indeed work in the right hands.

And did I have a hair transplant?

You'll have to watch the programme to find out ...

**Gerry Anderson's Losing It, BBCOne NI, tonight, 10.35pm**

**'The oddest solution to baldness I came across was a tattooist in LA'**

**enough to turn their heads ..**

☛ Northern Irish actor James Nesbitt went public with his hair transplant in 2010 after trying various methods to slow his hair loss

☛ In 2011 Manchester United footballer Wayne Rooney reportedly paid £30,000 for his hair transplant operation. He immediately went public and joked about it

☛ After years of hiding under hats, Dancing on Ice judge Jason Gardiner forked out £30,000 for a hair transplant last year. Part of the procedure was revealed live on the internet

☛ X Factor judge Louis Walsh has given a resounding 'Yes' to his own £30,000 hair transplant which he said he had done after prompting by Simon Cowell

# 'Baldness and hair treatments are no longer taboo'

Dr Maurice Collins has treated celebrities like Jimmy Nesbitt and Louis Walsh at his clinic in Dublin. By **Jamie McDowell**

**D**r Maurice Collins prefers to liken his hair transplant surgery technique to horticulture. "I like to think of what I do as removing the roses from the back garden and planting them in the front garden," he smiles.

The 65-year-old Dublin-based surgeon first became interested in hair transplant surgery 17 years ago, and after starting his work at the Blackrock Clinic in Dublin he now has his own clinic next door, which is still affiliated with Blackrock.

Dr Collins features in tonight's BBC One programme, Gerry Anderson's *Losing It*, in which the radio and television presenter embarks on a quest to discover the treatments to defeat baldness.

"When I started to carry out this work, tackling the subject of baldness was virtually taboo," explains Dr Collins.

"Nobody would talk about it in public.

People would slink in and out of the clinic for fear of being seen.

"I think the breakthrough moment came recently when the footballer Wayne Rooney went public with his hair transplant and now the whole operation is as accepted as people getting laser eye surgery."

Among his many clients, Dr Collins can count actor James Nesbitt and X Factor judge Louis Walsh, but his list of happy customers come from all walks of life.

Dr Collins says: "Recently I had an ambassador come to the clinic. His security team had to go through and search the building before the operation.

"The day after that I had a road

ing. The sides and back of the head are immune to hair loss. Hair loss is actually in the genetic make up of the hair itself, so we take healthy hair follicles from the back and sides of the head and transplant them onto the top of the scalp.

"The process is pretty lengthy. The other day we transplanted 9,000 hairs for someone. It took 10 hours and a team of 18 nurses and surgeons."

He adds: "Each hair follicle is a living organ, and the process is essentially an organ transplant, so it's quite a delicate operation. In the two weeks after the transplant, the patient needs to be very careful not to traumatise the hair follicles, but after that they'll just have normal hair, which will take about three months to grow fully."

It is a very expensive operation, with charges starting at around £8 per graft, and with many hundreds of grafts can be transplanted during the procedure, that soon adds up to a considerable sum.

But Dr Collins puts it in perspective. He laughs: "If people prioritise the transplant they will find the money. It's an investment for life, and it never devalues. In fact it grows in value..."

With so many celebrities on the books, it's no wonder that Dr Collins attracts people from various far-flung corners of the world to his clinic, renowned as one of the best there is.

His philosophy is simple. Dr Collins believes a man's insecurities rise not out of vanity, but of the trauma associated with hair loss.

"Hair loss causes a vulnerabil-

sweeper.

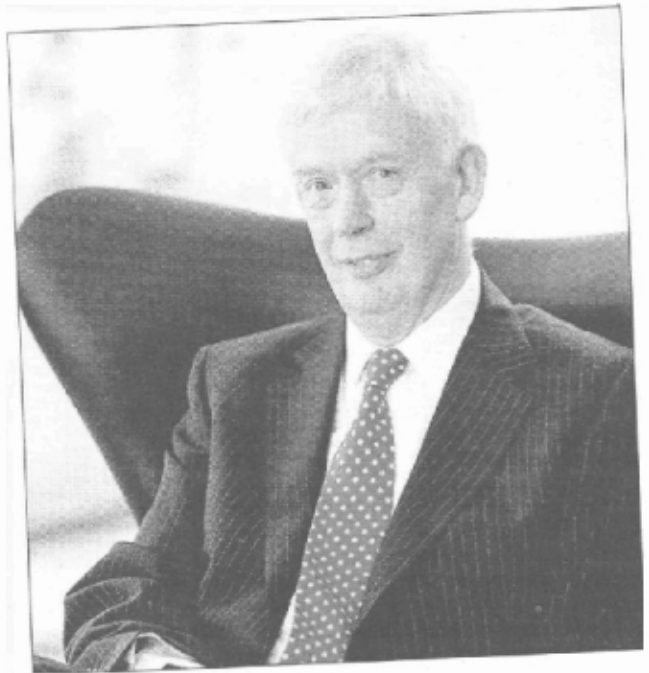
"Once my patients come in and sit in a chair beside me they're all the same though. It's a great

leveller."

So how does Dr Collins perform a hair transplant?

"I find the whole thing fascinat-

**Baldness can affect up to 30% of men in the UK. It can start in a man's teens, but for most it happens in their late 20s**



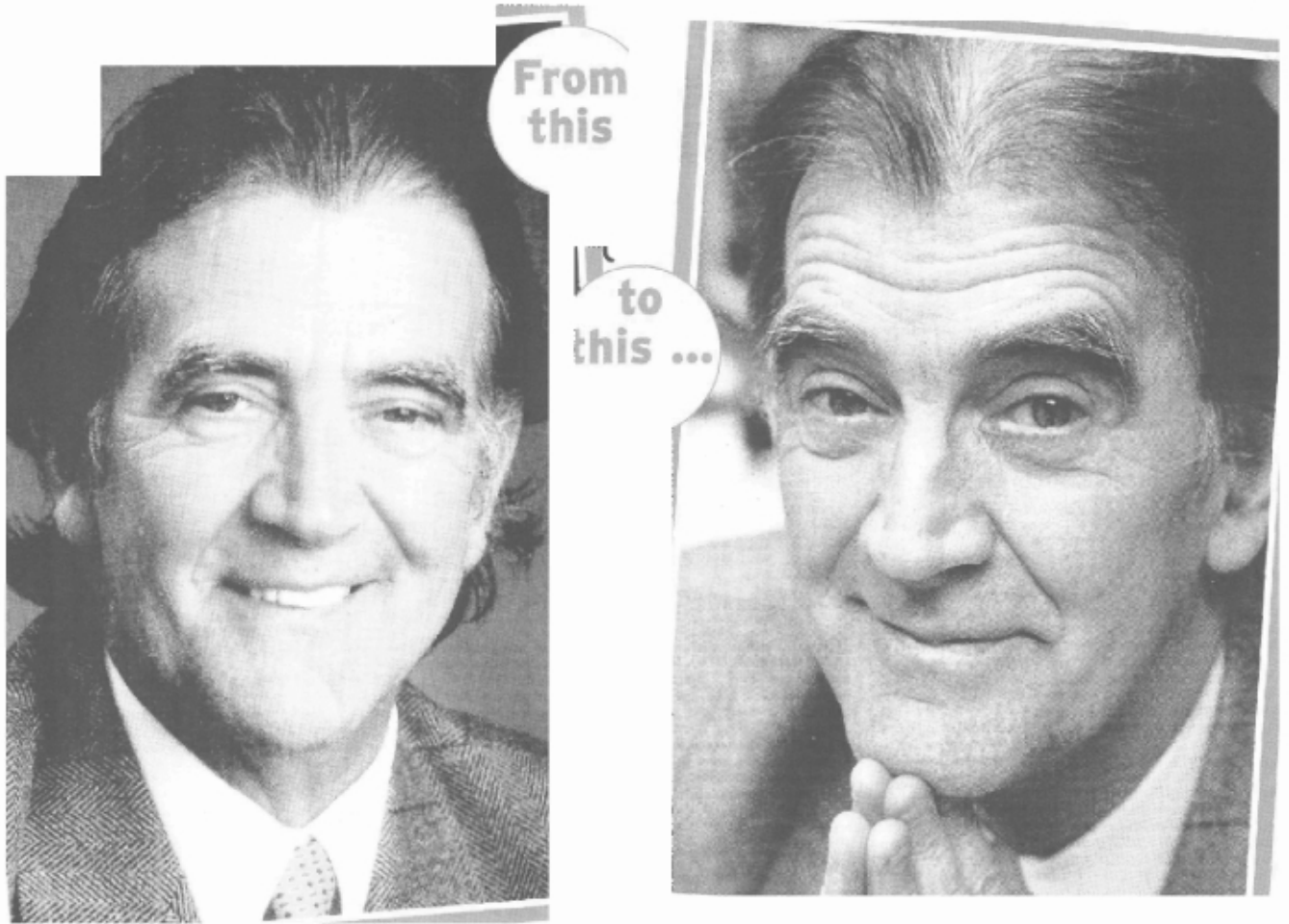
Star clients: Dr Maurice Collins

ity among men. Some patients I treat may have spent up to four years mulling over the decision of coming to get a hair transplant.

"I think when a man looks in the mirror he wants to see the image that he has of himself in his mind. When he matches that image and he's looking good, it means he's feeling good.

"Recently I had Louis Walsh back in for a post-transplant check up. He told me how much it had changed his life — that he had so much more self-esteem. I could tell by watching him on the X Factor that his whole demeanour had changed, and this is a guy that already had tons of confidence in the first place."

**For more information on Hair Restoration Blackrock visit [www.hair-surgery.co.uk](http://www.hair-surgery.co.uk)**



# Did Gerry get a transplant like these



**Miracle grow: (from left) James Nesbitt, Wayne Rooney, Jason Gardiner and Louis Walsh before and after their new look**