

## Snobbery condemned our poor to the Yella Hole

**L**AST WEEK I sat on a hillock, under the shadow of a large wooden cross in a little graveyard at Watch House Cross, on the Killeely Road, Thomondgate. This graveyard is almost a century and a half old. It was opened in 1849, and it was known as the "Paupers" because only paupers were buried there. Its proper name is St. Bridget's, but it was known as the "Yella Hole" by those of another era.

If we look back on the history of Limerick, there is plenty of evidence to be found of snobbery and intolerance in the treatment of the very poor in our society. The treatment meted out to the dispossessed, the homeless, the paupers in the mid 19th century, and into the mid 20th century is nothing to be proud of. It didn't seem to cause embarrassment to the

"authorities" of the time, or indeed to those who preached on the dignity of the very poor.

Blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the Kingdom of God, seemed to have salved their collective conscience. Before the union workhouse, later the city home, now St. Camillus' Hospital, was built and began to receive those that the law designated as paupers of the Limerick union in 1841, the paupers were denied burial because none of the local burial grounds would allow paupers to be buried in them.

In 1849 the need for a new paupers graveyard was realised by leasing a plot of land from one Daniel Cullen, who had in turn leased it from the Earl of Landowne. This lease was held by the Board of Guardians (the administration body of

the city home).

This is the piece of hallowed ground where thousands of nameless souls lay buried, without even a little cross to mark their last resting place. There is an employee of St. Camillus' Hospital, a schoolmaster, buried there, at his own request, because he loved the paupers in life. There is a nun buried there as well, a Sister Baptiste. I have no documentary evidence of this, but I got it on good authority.

This little graveyard lay neglected and abandoned for decades until lately, now it is being cleaned up and a new road has been laid, the grass has been cut and it looks very clean and tidy. All this good work has been done by the FAS Community Scheme and the Limerick Corporation. Mr. Reginald Turner, supervisor

for the Limerick Corporation, and the workers from the surrounding locality should be congratulated on the excellent work of restoration they are accomplishing out at Watch House Cross.

Bridget's Graveyard will be officially opened on the first of February, 1998 (St. Bridget's Birthday).

This once-neglected graveyard will become a focal point for tourists in search of their roots. There will be a memorial stone erected to all who rest there. The original cross will still cast its gaunt shadow over all who rest there, and St. Bridget's cloak will cover them and keep them warm, in God's love.

P.S.: I would like to acknowledge the help I received from the staff of the Limerick City Library during my research.

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### Payback budget?

**L**AST WEEK "PAY BACK time" is the new buzz phrase in Irish politics, with seemingly everyone focused on the size of the tax cuts they can expect in the Budget.

But for the 2,500 families with mentally handicapped child on the waiting list for day for day and residential services, it is their last chance, probably in their lifetime, before the new budget discipline that will come in 1999, with the advent of the European Economic and Monetary Union and the Euro, to get what are only their basic

## Picture this: up to 80,000 cards defending city

### Unsung heroes

**T**HE recent deaths of two global humanitarian personalities from diametrically opposed backgrounds brought great sadness and despair to those whose lives they affected and a sense of loss to all those who knew of them and their good works through the media.

One, Mother Theresa, better known as the "Saint of the Gutters," was God's gift to the poor and deprived, particularly in impoverished India, where about 60 per cent of a pop-

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