

Ceremony to honour famine and plague victims

Eugene Phelan

THOUSANDS of Limerick city people who died of starvation and the plague will be remembered at a special ceremony next week.

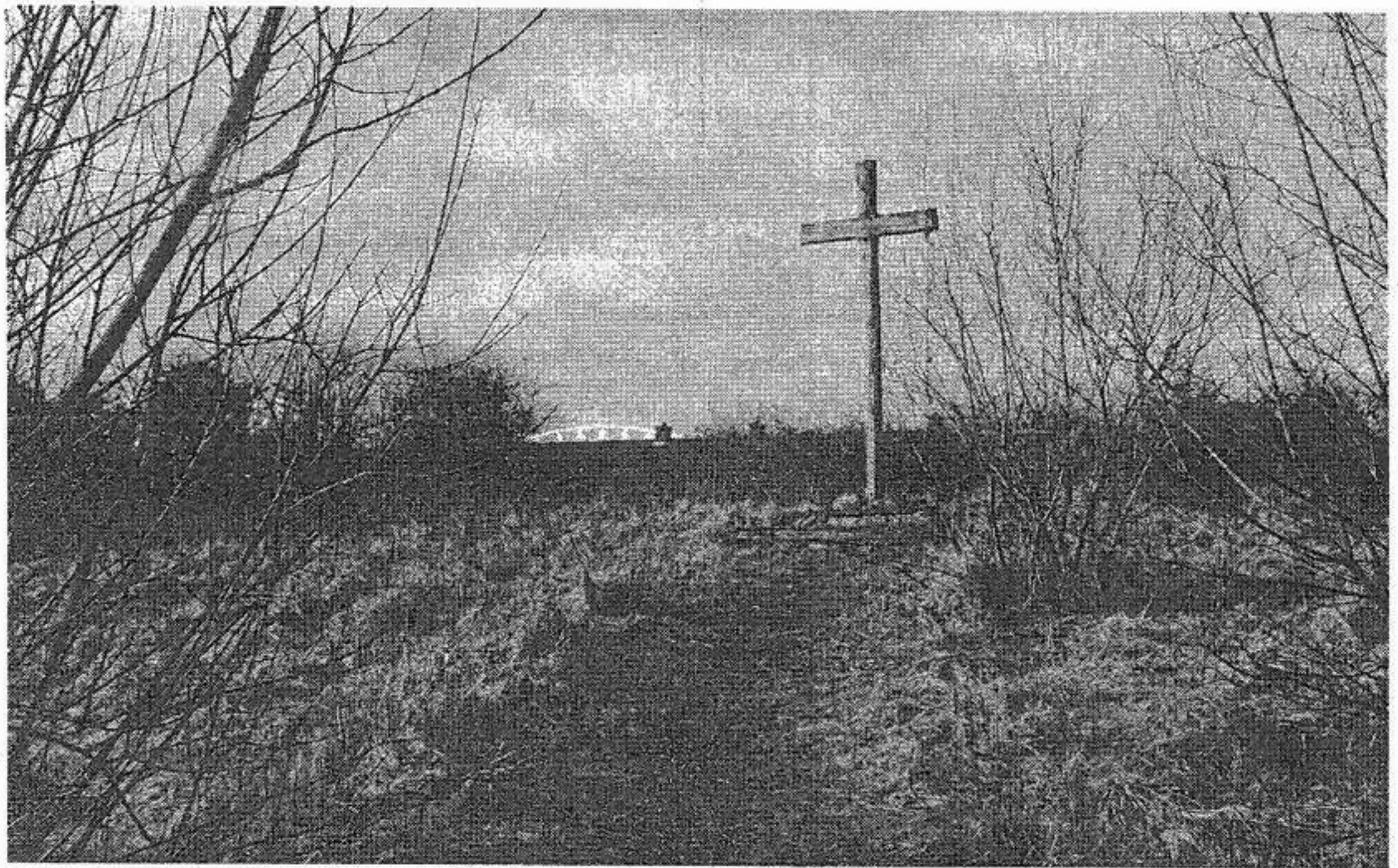
Next Wednesday at 2.30pm Mayor Kevin Kiely will oversee an ecumenical blessing in St Brigid's graveyard, Kileely. The blessing will be carried out by Fr Donal McNamara, PP, St Munchin's, and the Church of Ireland Dean of Limerick, Rev Maurice Sirr.

"St Brigid's graveyard, Kileely, was the burial place for thousands of people during famine times. I would encourage people from the area to come along and attend this ceremony," said Mayor Kiely.

English writer Spencer T Hall, in his book, *Life and Death in Ireland in 1849*, wrote: "Not less than 500 cholera cases occurred in a week. One vast grave existed in a field outside of the city into which nearly 2,000 bodies had been gathered in less than a month."

Mayor Kiely said that many people had been in contact with him to do something about the graveyard.

"It has been on my mind for sometime and many people



The lone cross in St Brigid's graveyard in Kileely which was erected to the memory of the thousands who died from plague and in the famine and who are buried in the cemetery

(CI)

are buried there in mass graves, and I think it is only fitting that we should remember them."

Bard of Thomond Michael Hogan, who grew up next to the graveyard, in his memoirs wrote: "I have a fearful recollection of those dreadful years of devastation. I remember seeing the famine and plague pits open in the fields of Kileely where thousands of

coffinless corpses were flung in heaps over each other."

Mayor Kiely will unveil a commemorative plaque in memory of the many people buried in St Brigid's and will organise for Limerick City Council's environment department to carry out improvement works in the area.

"I know this area very well, and intended during this mayoralty that appropriate recog-

nition be accorded to the many souls interred in St Brigid's. I hope that this gesture by Limerick City Council will go in some way towards respecting the memory of the people who have been buried here during what were tragic times in this country," he said.

After the ceremony, refreshments will be served in St Munchin's Community Centre.

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