

# DELL'S SUCCESS HITS JOBS AT AST

By LAURA RYAN

**DELL'S** success has hit another Limerick based computer company which has been forced to shut down its manufacturing operation with a loss of 21 jobs.

AST Ireland, also based in Raheen, has announced a voluntary redundancy programme for the 21 permanent employees who manufacture and assemble laptop computers. The department will cease operations by December 15.

The other three departments, a multi-lingual call centre, systems repair, and e-commerce will remain operational and unaffected by the closure.

AST site manager, Joe Cahalane, said this morning he is "very disappointed" by the need to reduce the current workforce.

"But we're hoping to grow ourselves as a European service centre and luckily it's a buoyant market," he said. "We're still seeking to bring the company forward and re-deploy some of the manufacturing staff into other sections of the company."

AST was set up in Limerick in 1993 as an American owned company. By

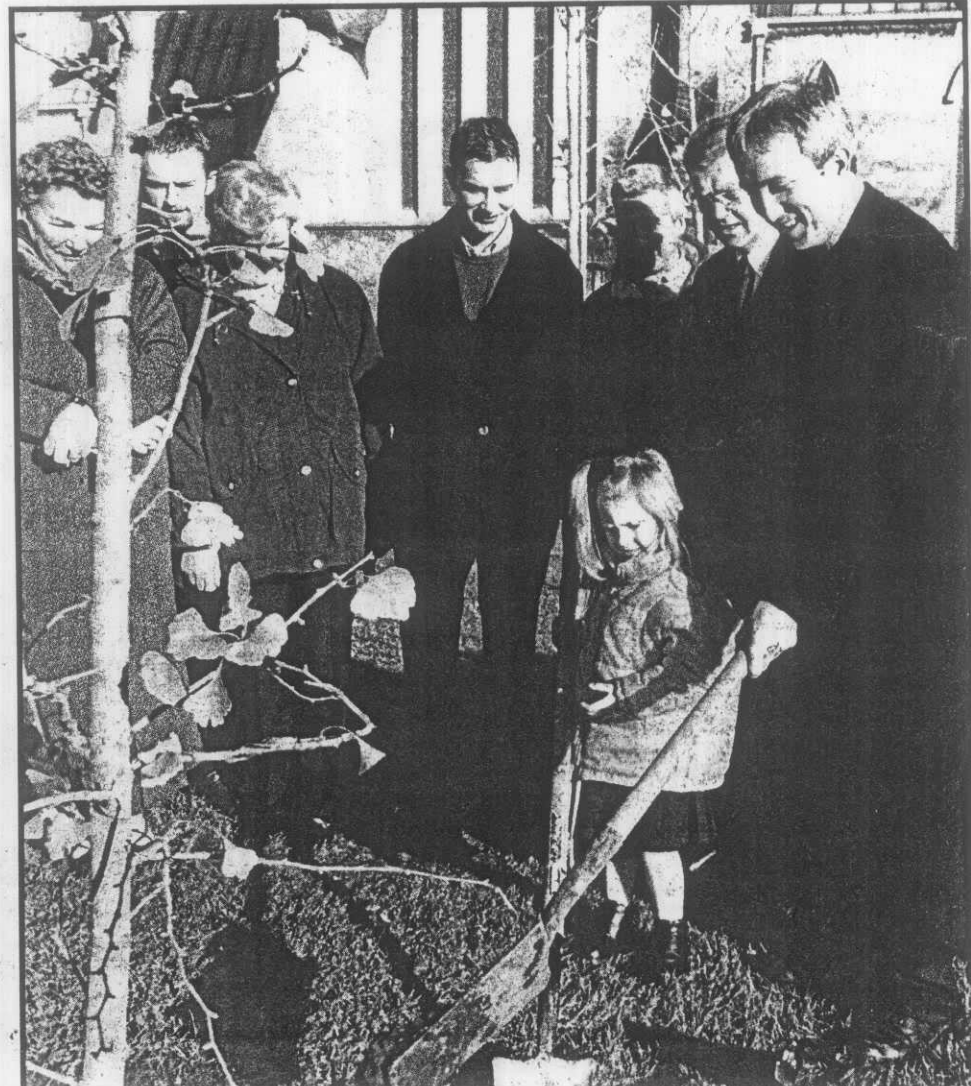
1996, it employed 580 people, but was taken over by Korean electrical giants, Samsung.

According to an IDA spokesman, AST lost out badly to the "new breed" of computer companies like Gateway and its Raheen neighbours Dell.

"As a result of the success of companies like Dell, it lost market share badly and announced further cutbacks," the spokesman confirmed. "It introduced the manufacturing of laptop computers, but sadly that is now to fold."

AST has agreed with the IDA that they will continue to operate a European service centre incorporating system repair, service logistics and multi-lingual, technical support and customer services. The company has also taken the initiative to develop a business in the e-commerce area.

Ironically, many of the former AST workers are now working with Dell.



## LETTERS TO SANTA

THE Limerick Leader are once again pleased to announce that we have secured a 'hot line' direct to Santa's Grotto in Lapland.

week, November 26, will be published in the Limerick Leader and they will then be sent to Lapland where the man himself will be