



## DOWN YOUR STREET

With IAIN DEMPSEY

# Frank talk about that book . . .

WITH all the brouhaha surrounding Limerick and Angela's Ashes at the moment, we felt it appropriate to head up to Frank McCourt's old neighbourhood and feature a street that would have been one of his old haunts.

Bowman Street still has the old walls from McCourt's time at the back of the 100-year-old houses that look out onto Vizes Court. While

Limerick, and especially this part of Limerick, has been made famous by McCourt's book and the subsequent Alan Parker film, not everyone in the area is too taken with the famous Limerick author's version of how life was.

One such person is Dessie McDarby, who has been living in Bowman Street for 32 years.

I asked him had he been to see the film of Angela's Ashes.

"I wouldn't go and see

that film. McCourt is telling lies about Limerick and that's the reason I wouldn't go. It's true what Dicky Harris said that the film should get an Oscar for special rain effects. It doesn't rain that much in Limerick. McCourt lived just down the road here on Barrack Hill and later in Carroll's Row. I had a shop down there at one time."

He remembers how things used to be. "There was a shop on the corner here called The Curio that was there for years and years. It closed down about a year ago when the owners died. I was told that at one time it was a pub.

"The major change, as with everywhere else, is that people die and so the street changes. A lot of these houses now are flats." This is confirmed somewhat when most of the doors we knock on are unanswered. The occupants are all either out at college or, being students, still in bed.

After a bit of persistence we meet Eileen O'Donnell, originally from Abbeyfeale and a resident for 18 years. She loves living in Bowman Street because it's very central yet quiet.

"It's very close to the schools, too, which is handy for the children," she said.

Eileen had a most interesting tale to tell.

"When they were filming Angela's Ashes, they were using the back of these houses as the old walls are still there. It was a funeral scene where a horse came around the corner and people threw buckets of water out onto the street.

"The filmmakers' spotted that we had one of the old style coal bunkers in our yard and so they filmed some of

the film in our backyard.

"They were here for a day and took the place over with all the cameras and equipment. It's probably only on the screen for a few seconds and they had to work for a whole day for it. It was great excitement for the kids.

"We met Alan Parker and he was a really lovely man. He was very

polite and nice. It's not every house that can say their backyard is in a major motion picture."

She added: "I haven't seen the film yet, but I definitely intend going. I read both Frank McCourt's books and enjoyed them thoroughly. I know a lot of people around here aren't happy with his version of events but I didn't live here so I can't

comment."

She is not wrong. We meet another local who is not happy with the book or the film.

He said: "I lived in the area at the time and things were no way as bad as McCourt claims they were. The slums in the film are completely exaggerated and my God it doesn't always rain in Limerick.

"He has made some gross exaggerations and told some awful lies. I know that he has put Limerick on the map and that tourism has increased and everything but it's for all the wrong reasons."

He added: "There's a lot of things wrong with the film. For instance, when the McCourts are in America before they move back to Limerick, the kids all have Limerick accents. They should have had American accents. And then at times they have Dublin accents. What's that all about? I don't want to go into what McCourt's life was like, but it seems to me that he's told some blatant lies."

So amidst all the media attention surrounding Angela's Ashes, the release of the film and the backlash against McCourt, a visit to his old area shows that not everybody is



• Eileen O'Donnell, backyard featured in the film of Angela's Ashes, with the old walls behind her

proud of what McCourt has done for Limerick. Granted, the people we spoke to were only a handful and don't represent everybody's attitude, but they certainly aren't happy with one of Limerick's favourite sons.

The McCourt bandwagon at least

brought happiness and excitement to Eileen O'Donnell's day when Alan Parker and his crew shot part of the movie in her backyard. The controversy surrounding Angela's Ashes will die down some time in the near future, but life will go on in Bowman Street.

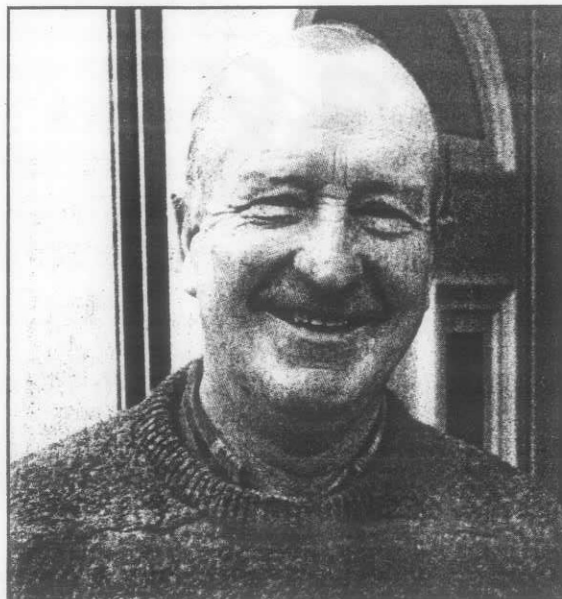


• Bowman Street: synonymous with the young Frank McCourt, but not everybody agrees with him

(LL)



• The old walls on Vizes Court at the back of Bowman Street



• Dessie McDarby: has lived on Bowman Street for 32 years