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FREEDOM OF THE CITY FOR FRANK?

■ Mayor proposes the posthumous award for author of Angela's Ashes

By ANNE SHERIDAN

FRANK McCourt, "the author who put Limerick city on the map", should posthumously receive the Freedom of the City of Limerick, Mayor of Limerick, Cllr Kevin Kiely, has said.

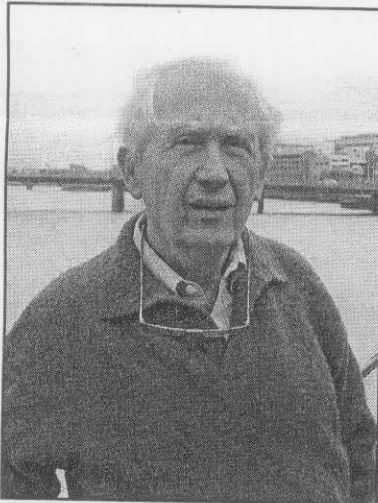
It has also been proposed that a bronze statue of the famous author should be erected on Bedford Row - alongside the statue of the late actor Richard Harris, whom McCourt famously fought with in a New York bar.

The Mayor was speaking at the signing of a book of condolences in memory of the late Angela's Ashes author, who passed away on Sunday last after a battle with meningitis and skin cancer.

Mayor Kiely said it was one of his regrets that Frank McCourt and actor Richard Harris never received the Freedom of the City.

"It's unfortunate that we have to wait until some people pass away before they're recognised with the Freedom of the City," he said.

Mayor Kiely led the tributes in the book of condolences to the Pulitzer Prize winning author, which will remain open for a number of weeks



The late Frank McCourt

at City Hall, Merchant's Quay.

"Frank, you will never be forgotten by your city of Limerick," wrote the Mayor.

Other heartfelt messages read: "He was wonderful", "An incredible book - we are proud of you", "Thank you for the inspiration", and



Mayor Kevin Kiely signing the Book of Condolences to the late Frank McCourt in City Hall this week. Looking on are, Tom Mackey, the city manager, and Cllr Michael Hourigan

PICTURE: OWEN SOUTH

"Thanks for sharing your memories."

A protocol meeting on the issue of granting the Freedom of the City is now expected to be held in early September after Mayor Kiely raised the issue this week with city manager Tom Mackey.

All city councillors will have to unanimously agree to grant the Freedom of the City on its only Pulitzer Prize winning author.

Dominic Taylor, one of the organisers of the White House poetry night in Limerick, said he wouldn't be where he is today without the support of the late writer.

"He's been very generous to the people of Limerick, especially to the artistic community, and he personally supported two projects of mine which wouldn't have started only for him. I just wanted to say thanks in one way or another for that."

"Either he's responsible or he's to blame, but hopefully there will be a memorial service at least for him in the coming weeks here," said Mr Taylor.

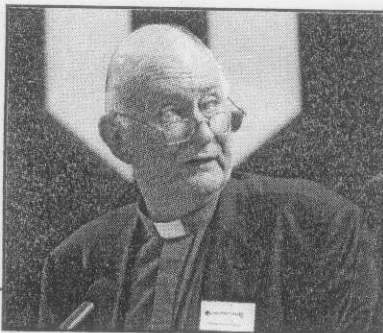
The book will remain open at City Hall, Merchant's Quay, for a number of weeks and will then be handed over to his widow Ellen, and family.

Limerick Diocese defends its child protection safeguards

By MIKE DWANE

A SPOKESMAN for Bishop Donal Murray has defended child protection safeguards in Limerick after documentary maker and author Mary Raftery called for a judicial inquiry into clerical sex abuse in the diocese.

Ms Raftery, whose investigations helped to lift the lid on child abuse in the Catholic Church, last night claimed the Diocese of Limerick shared committees with the Diocese of Cloyne (Cork), where a commission of inquiry is investigating child abuse by clerics. The report on abuse in the Archdiocese of Dublin was presented to Justice Minister Dermot Ahern yesterday but publication looks likely to be delayed over ongoing criminal proceedings against two priests named in that



Bishop Donal Murray

report. Speaking on RTE Drivetime, Ms Raftery said the Dublin Archdiocese now had "progressive" child protection arrangements in place but claimed other dioceses

were lacking, singling out Limerick for mention.

"I would suggest there are serious problems in Limerick that should be examined by a commission of inquiry because we became aware of some difficulties in Limerick through Cloyne and some of the shared committees they had," she said.

But diocesan secretary Fr Paul Finnerty responded that there was no common committee between the dioceses in relation to child protection.

"The safety of children has the highest priority in the Diocese of Limerick," Fr Finnerty said.

"A child safeguarding committee operates in the Diocese of Limerick. There is no shared child protection committee between the Diocese of Limerick and the Diocese of Cloyne. Within the diocese, and in every

parish of the diocese, there are trained and committed people to ensure that children and young people are safe."

"The diocese meets with An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive several times a year to review all cases. If Mary Raftery is aware of information which would cause concern, it should be reported to the Gardaí and HSE."

"The Diocese itself would also be most anxious to receive any such information."

Bishop Murray is one of 19 senior church figures whose handling of abuse complaints in the capital between 1975 and 2004 comes under scrutiny in the report submitted to Minister Ahern yesterday.

He was auxiliary bishop of Dublin in 1983 when he was approached by parishioners, including a former garda, in Wicklow who made com-

plaints against paedophile priest Fr Thomas Naughton.

Ms Raftery said: "All he did was pass it up the line to his Archbishop at the time, who was Archbishop (Dermot) Ryan...the level of responsibility not taken on board by people who were then auxiliary bishops in Dublin and are now full bishops all over the country begs the question as to their concept of right and wrong, their concept of conscience and, crucially, their concept of protection of children."

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