

BRIEFS

■ Istabraq holds off the rest to win

HE MAY be retired but Istabraq is still pipping other horses at the post. The apple of JP McManus' eye has voted Ireland's favourite horse of the last 25 years. Istabraq beat off stiff competition from the likes of Dawn Run, Moscow Flyer and Limestone Lad to win the hotly contested title.

As the winner of The Big Horse Painting Competition, over the coming ten months Istabraq will be painted by artist Nicola Russell on a giant canvas measuring 16 feet by 11 feet. JP McManus said, like the rest of the country, Istabraq holds a special place in his affections.

"I was always bowled over by how the Irish people took him to their hearts, and their support and affection for him during his glory days. In a way Istabraq belongs to everybody. He is still in fine form and enjoying his well deserved retirement," said Mr McManus.



Istabraq, Ireland's favourite racehorse over the last 25 years as voted by the Irish public, with his owner JP McManus, handler Caroline Collins and artist Nicola Russell, who will paint the horse

■ McCabe Clan Rally at Slieve Russell Hotel

CALLING all the McCabe families in Limerick. The Annual McCabe Clan Rally will be held, under the auspices of the Clan McCabe Society, on Sunday August 9 in the Slieve Russell Hotel in Ballyconnell, Co Cavan starting at 3pm. Guest speaker at the rally will be Harry McCabe from Dublin who will speak about the history of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. The Rally will also be addressed by research officer, Gary McCabe, in relation to McCabe history and heritage.

There will also be a comprehensive display of documents and memorabilia relating to McCabe history and heritage, available during the day.

All Mc Cables, and anyone with an interest in the name, are cordially invited to attend. Admission is free

■ Healthy Heart trek in the Burren

LIMERICK walkers are invited to take part in a 'heart healthy trek' through the scenic Burren in aid of the heart charity Croi.

This year's event is organised by The Burren Walking Club and it takes place on Saturday, August 29.

The stunning walk through the Clare hills is a guaranteed fun day out, which involves gentle hill terrain with the choice of three distances - nine miles, 15 miles and 17 miles for the more adventurous.

Registration on the morning takes place from 10am at the Fanore Recreational Area, Fanore, Co Clare.

Refreshments will be provided on the day and each participant will receive a commemorative t-shirt.

For further information or registration pack contact Sarah-Jane on 091-544310 or email sarahjane@croi.ie or log onto www.croi.ie

Burglar gets 10 months in jail on 'myriad of charges'

Petula Martyn

A BURGLAR who "actively pursued a criminal enterprise" while on temporary release from Limerick prison has been sentenced to 10 months in jail.

Judge Tom O'Donnell said there isn't a restaurant or business premises that isn't safe from Wesley Higgins who broke into three city restaurants in May, June and July this year.

The 32-year-old who has an address at Ryan's Cottages, Rosbrien faced what the judge described as "a myriad of charges".

Limerick District Court heard that Mr Higgins gained access to Sage Cafe, Cather-



Solicitor Ted McCarthy said his client offered a genuine apology to the court

ine Street, on May 13 at 2.25am, and stole a small quantity of cash. During the

course of his detention for this crime, the prisoner admitted breaking into Heirlooms on Cruises Street.

Two days later he was captured on CCTV entering Number 1 Pery Square and taking €60 from a cash register in a store room.

On June 7, Mr Higgins broke into La Piccola on O'Connell Street at 2.30am by kicking in the front door of the Italian restaurant.

He took three bottles of spirits and was captured on CCTV leaving the premises. He was arrested a short time later wearing the same clothing he had been wearing when he perpetrated the crime. He was found in possession of a small screwdriver.

During his detention, Mr Higgins admitted breaking into the same restaurant on February 2.

The court was told that on July 13 last, gardai responded to a call at Sage Cafe at 2.16am. They observed the defendant through an extensively damaged front door.

Mr Higgins was aggressive and there was a struggle to arrest him, the court heard. They found €5 in change that had been stolen from the tip jar in his possession.

Solicitor Darrach McCarthy said his client, who has 47 previous convictions, had made admissions and assisted gardai when arrested by volunteering information about break-ins that he had not been arrested

for. "His apology is genuine," Mr McCarthy said. "He is honest about his guilt. He can offer no more than his apology."

Judge O'Donnell said Mr Higgins has to realise that if he continues in this fashion he must bear the responsibility for his actions.

He imposed a 10 month sentence for the burglary at Sage Cafe perpetrated on July 13, a concurrent 10 month sentence for the same offence carried out on May 13, a concurrent 10 month sentence for the burglary at La Piccola on February 15 and a six month concurrent sentence for possession of a screwdriver on that same date.

Author showed Concern

■ Frank McCourt would say instead of paying him a fee: 'Give it to Concern'

Donal O'Regan

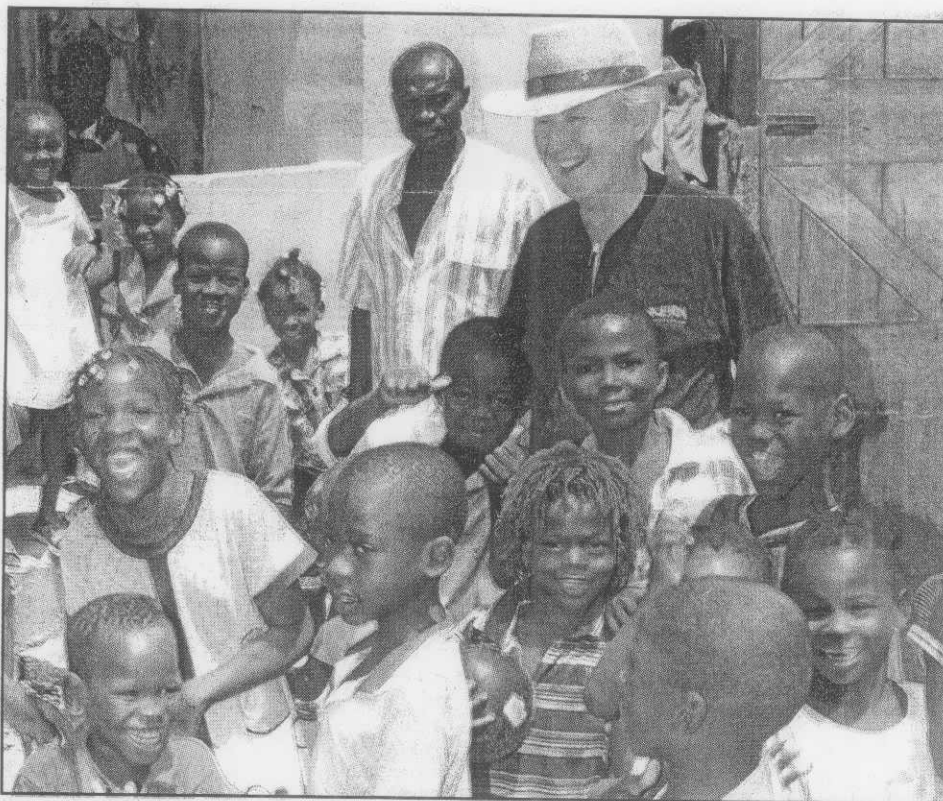
ANONYMOUS cheques kept being dropped in the letter box of Concern's headquarters in New York, thanks to Frank McCourt.

Siobhan Walsh, executive director of Concern Worldwide US, said they kept "getting cheques in the door. He was involved in a lot of different public speaking events. Frank would say instead of people paying him a fee for whatever speech he had done, he would say 'no give it to Concern,'" said Ms Walsh, who is from Fedamore.

Mr McCourt had always been a supporter of the charity founded by his good friend Fr Aengus Finucane and his brother Fr Jack Finucane.

This support culminated with a trip to Haiti - one of the poorest countries in the world - in 2005 with Ms Walsh. And it wasn't a case of a celebrity flying in for a few hours and getting his picture taken then hopping back on their private jet, Mr McCourt was there for a week.

"It had such an effect on him. He spent a lot of time travelling for hours in a car to get to the programme locations, villages and even a remote island. He was quite extraordinary on the trip because it wasn't an easy trip. For the first couple of days he



The late Limerick author Frank McCourt in Haiti with Concern, a charity he loved, in 2005

didn't say a lot, he was absorbing it," she said.

Ms Walsh said from Mr McCourt's teaching career he loved meeting the kids and spending time with them in

Haiti. "You can see from the photographs - what was his passion? His passion was being with the children and talking to the children. He wanted to see the kind of

schools they were in and to see what it was like for a young child in Haiti growing up and going to school," said Ms Walsh. And just weeks before he passed away, Mr

McCourt was contemplating going on another charity mission. "I met him just a few weeks ago at a fundraising event in the Irish Repertory Theatre in New York. He had a big smile on his face and said he wanted to go on another one. He said, 'Siobhan I haven't given up on going someplace else with you and this time I'll bring Ellen'. He said he wanted to get his wife involved as well. He said he hadn't given up on that [another charity trip] yet," said Ms Walsh.

Along with donating his public speaking fees he also worked on a charity campaign with Concern. He contacted many supporters of Concern and wrote to their donors. "He talked about the importance of a good education. He explained what it was like to be a school teacher in Haiti where you often don't have chalk or a blackboard. Many of the children would be hungry and have carried water for two or three hours before school. He was a big advocate for investing in education. He said every child on this earth should have the right to school," said Ms Walsh.

"He didn't forget poverty. He wasn't talking the talk, he walked the walk when he went to Haiti. He was a wonderful man, very down to earth," she concluded.

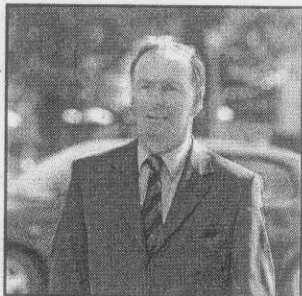
Judge warns of long prison terms for drugs offences

David Hurley

A JUDGE has issued a strong warning to young people across Limerick that they face lengthy jail sentences if they are convicted by him of drugs offences.

Judge Tom O'Donnell issued the warning as he expressed concerns about the increasing number of young people who are appearing before Limerick District Court on drugs charges.

In recent months a large



Judge Tom O'Donnell: warning to young people on drugs sentences

number of young people, who would not previously have come to gardai attention, have been arrested and charged with possession of drugs for the purposes of sale or supply.

Generally, the drugs seized were worth less than €1,000 and in the majority of cases they were seized when gardai searched the defendant's home. "I have been struck by the number of young people being brought before the courts and I find it significant that most of them have no

previous convictions yet they are participating in the sale or supply of cannabis and other illegal substances," said Judge O'Donnell.

During one recent case, the judge was told that a man in his mid 20's had cocaine worth around €800 hidden in a shoe box in his bedroom. The court heard his family did not know about his activities and that he had never been in trouble before.

During another case a young man admitted having a small amount of cannabis,

which he intended giving to his friends. "In most cases they have been caught red-handed by gardai and to their credit they have all co-operated but there doesn't seem to be an understanding that these are serious offences that carry jail sentences yet they are prepared to get involved in these enterprises," said Judge O'Donnell.

The judge added: "It is crass stupidity and the message should get out that if you are caught with drugs then you will go to jail."