

# 'Frank's spirit lives here'

## An emotional Malachy McCourt opens a museum dedicated to his late brother

**ANNE SHERIDAN**  
News Reporter

"FRANK, welcome to your new Limerick home," proclaimed Malachy McCourt in the city last week, as a museum dedicated to his famous brother Frank was officially opened.

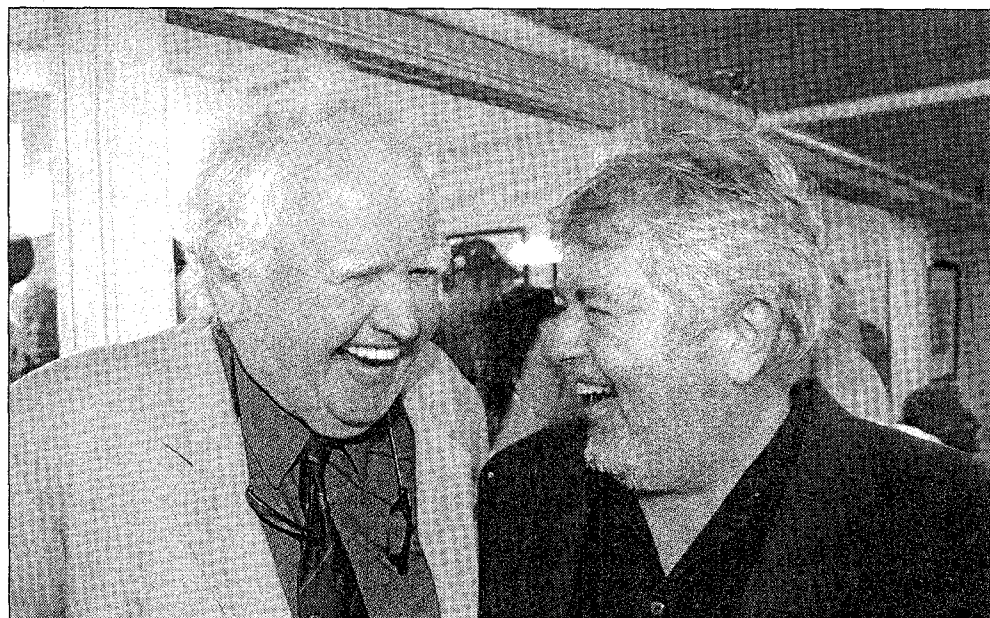
Artist Una Heaton was the driving force behind the museum, which is dedicated to the early life of Frank McCourt, the Pulitzer Prize winning author of 'Angela's Ashes'.

Ms Heaton said it was a "dream come true" to open the museum, which was the product of six months work.

An emotional Malachy McCourt, 79, was treated to a journey back through the early years of his life, and said he was "absolutely astounded" by the level of work which went in to creating the museum in their old school, Leamy's on Hartstonge Street.

However, he struggled to predict how his late brother might feel about this honour, saying Frank's work was his pleasure, not "outside adulation".

"He would be either highly



**Old times:** Malachy McCourt, brother of Frank, shares a laugh with Riverdance composer Bill Whelan at the opening of the Frank McCourt Museum in Leamy's School last week.

Picture: Michael Cowhey

amused or highly embarrassed," he said with a laugh.

Malachy, whose own memoirs have also been highly lauded, was accompanied on this trip down memory lane

by his wife Diana, son Cormac and grand-daughter Adriana.

He said Frank's "spirit never left this place and will always linger here", noting

that his brother once said: "Limerick is in my bones, just like my marrow."

Limerick, Malachy said, is an "exasperating place" and "has its snobs."

### CHECK IT OUT

■ More pictures from the museum opening

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But it also has compassion, generosity and decency, he added. "Remember you can rise from the ashes," he told the crowd.

The timing of the opening was perfectly auspicious as it was held just days before the two-year anniversary of Frank McCourt's death, this Tuesday, July 19. He died after a battle with the skin cancer melanoma, which left his weakened immune system susceptible to meningitis.

Gathering inspiration from his famous first memoir, Ms Heaton collected extensive memorabilia relating to his life, including a bicycle used in the filming of Angela's Ashes. In fact, she received so much that she had to donate some of the items to Saint Vincent de Paul.

The museum showcases

his classroom of the 1930s, as well as segments of the family home.

However, parts of the museum proved incongruous with McCourt's recollection of their life here, before leaving for America.

"We had no sink! No feckin' sink. Now that's upgrading us," boomed Malachy, as he saw the upstairs.

He then tested the bed.

"It's far more comfortable than we had. Ours was concave and you fell in in the middle."

Some of his ashes have been kept in a secure location at Leamy's, while another segment has been buried near their home in Roxbury, Connecticut.

Mick O'Donnell, the walking tour guide of Angela's Ashes, said the museum is "absolutely fantastic" and will be a focal point and a "bonus" for those going on the tour.

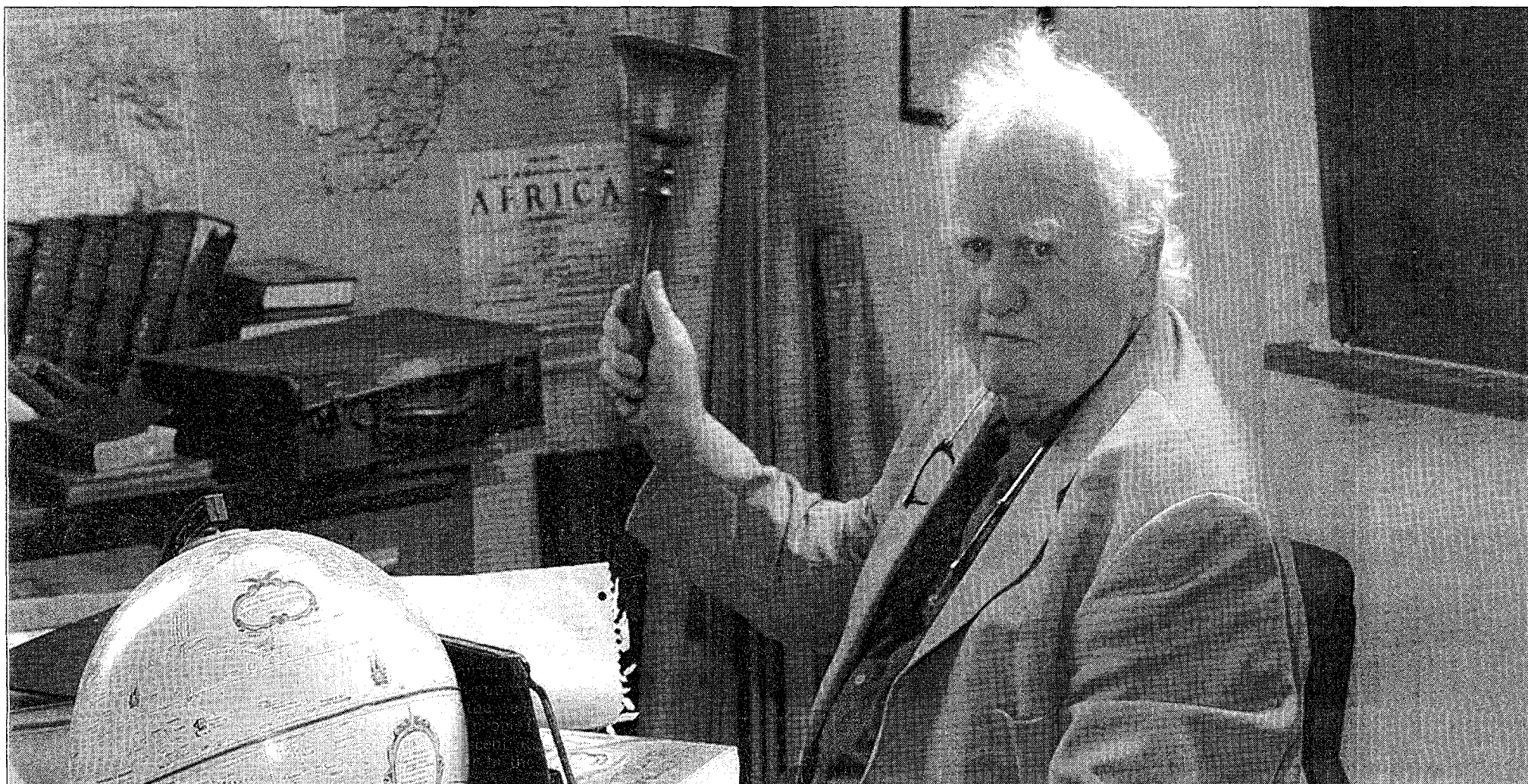
Built in 1843, Leamy's closed as a school in 1952 and has since re-opened as an art gallery, creative writing centre and now a museum in honour of one of Limerick's most famous sons. There is a €3 entry charge to the museum.

# MUNCHINS GRILL



PICTURE  
SPECIAL

# Opening of the Frank McCourt Museum



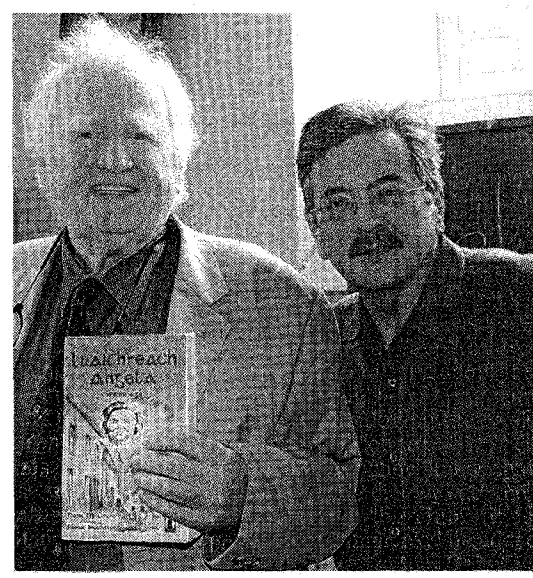
Time for class: Frank McCourt's brother Malachy rings the bell at the opening of the Frank McCourt Museum in Leamy House, Hartstonge Street



Joe Clancy and Joyce Walsh,



Composer Billy Whelan captures the moment



Malachy with Dominic Taylor,



Cathy O'Halloran, RTE, with Michael O'Donnell tour guide.



Lindsey Appleton, USA, Carmel O'Dwyer Dooradoyle, and Margaret Walsh Raheen enjoying the occasion

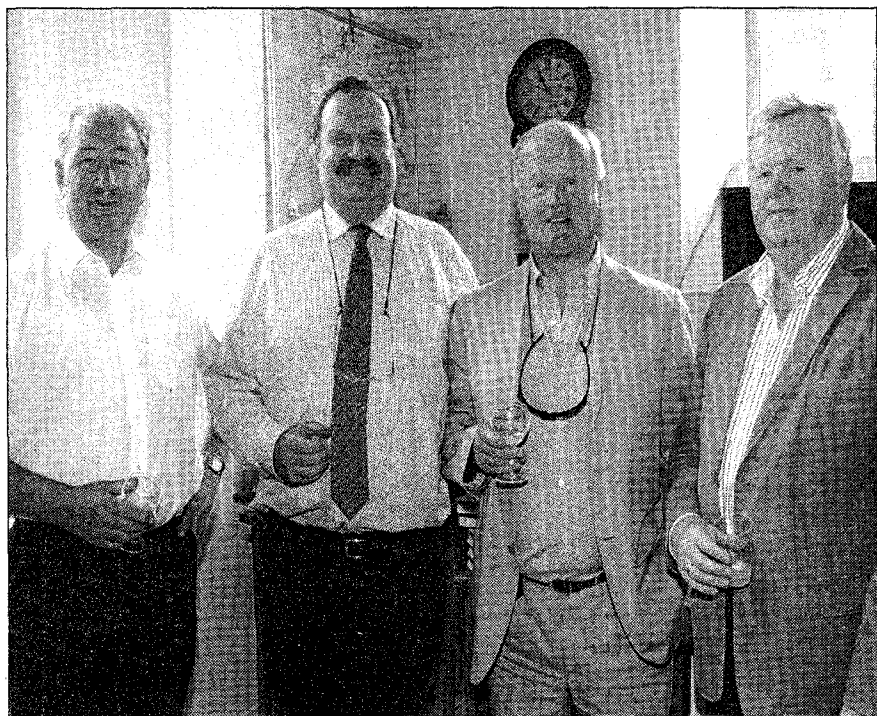


Cllr Marie Byrne and Sean Lally of the Strand Hotel at the opening



PICTURES:  
Michael Cowhey

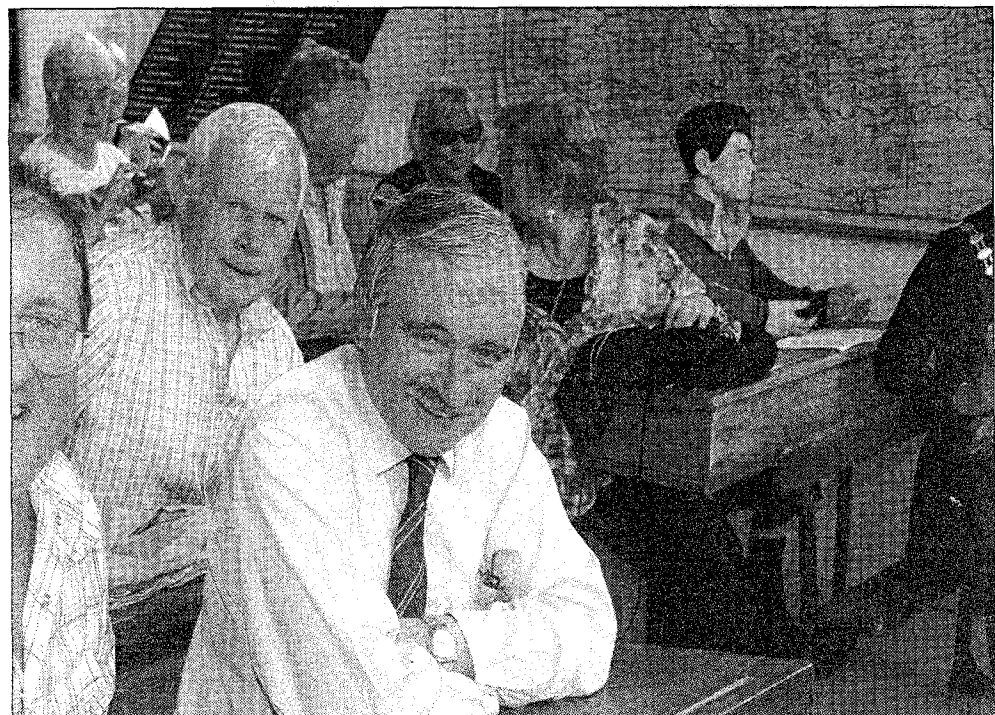
PICTURE  
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Brian Sinclear, John Heaton, Sean Canny and Willie Cooper



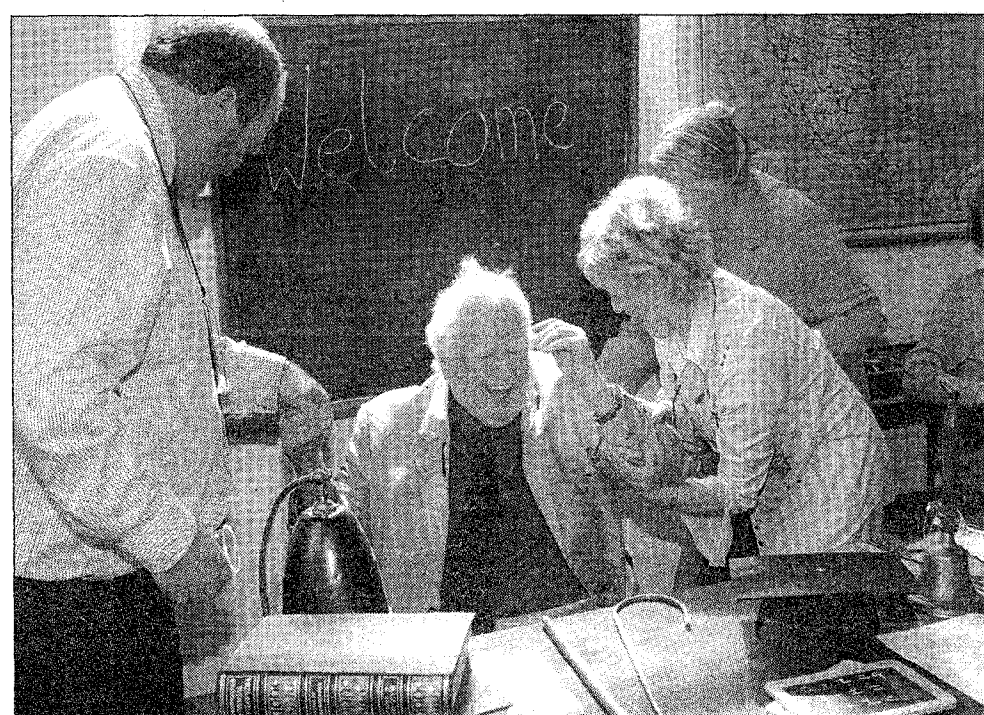
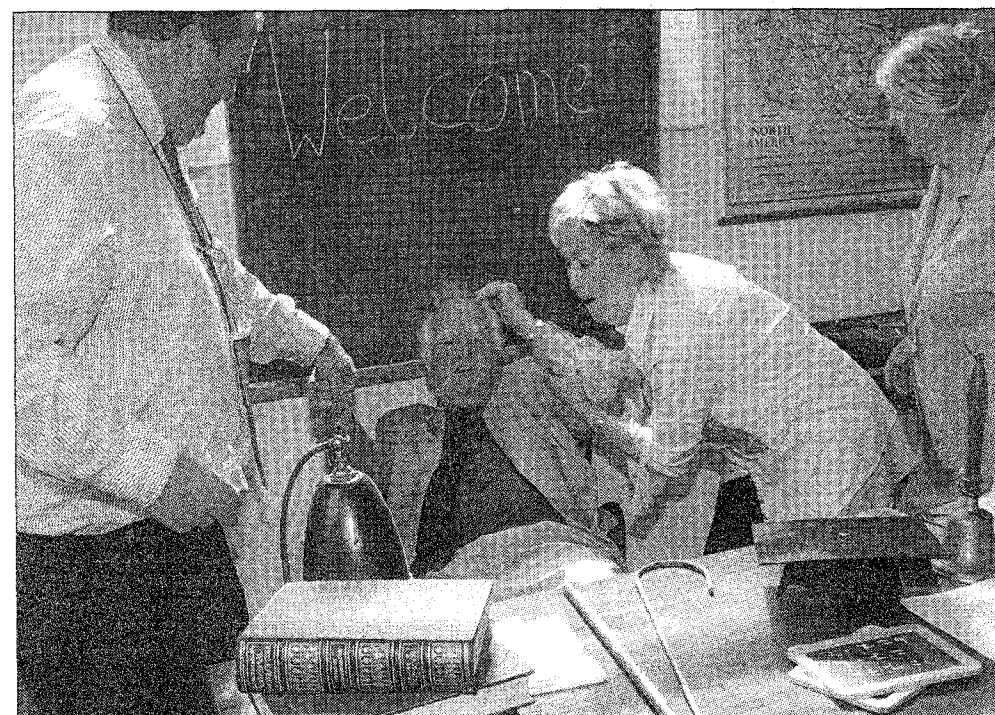
All smiles: some of the large attendance at the opening of the museum



Back to school: Willie O'Dea at one of the desks in the classroom



Mary Cowhey, Bill Whelan, and Nicky Woulfe



Oops: Malachy takes a topple from a wonky chair, but thankfully Una Heaton moves fast to arrest his fall and it's all smiles in the end



# 'Frank's spirit never left this place and will always linger'

■ Brother Malachy opens Frank McCourt museum in their former school, Leamy's, on Hartstonge Street

Anne Sheridan

A BOTTLE of stout, army jackets on the bed for warmth and a suitcase with the words 'Off to America' emblazoned on its side.

These are the things which form part of the newly opened Frank McCourt museum, an intended replica of the acclaimed author's early years in Limerick in the 1930s.

It is a homage to one of Limerick's own famous, if controversial, sons; a reminder of the poverty of our past and the hope and beauty of the American dream.

"This Frank McCourt museum is not and will not be a place of dead things, and of dead thinking. It will be a place of inspiration where people can say 'I too can dream'," said his brother Malachy McCourt, 79.

Mr McCourt, the actor and a fellow author, officially opened the museum last week in their alma mater - Leamy's on Hartstonge Street.

But he found that a few 'mod cons' had been thrown in too. It was, he agreed with a hearty laugh, a "new and improved version" of the McCourt home on Roden Lane.

"We had no sink! No feckin' sink. Now that's upgrading us," boomed Malachy, as he saw the upstairs.

He then tested the bed. "It's far more comfortable than we had. Ours was concave and you fell in in the middle."

The family, he said, had no toys, no electric lights, no radio and no wallpaper - all of which are part of the museum.

And yet, he was "astounded" by the work which went into it over a period of six months, at the behest of artist Una Heaton, whose family now owns the building.

It was within these walls that the McCourts



You've got to laugh ... Malachy McCourt with Riverdance composer Bill Whelan at the opening of the museum in the McCourts' former school, Leamy's

PICTURE: MIKE COWHEY

were schooled.

To Malachy it was the known as the "Leamy Academy of Surgeons, because they cut us up so much. You knew you were going to get belted, and walloped and smacked," he said of his school days, noting that he failed every subject in this school.

Malachy was treated to a journey back through the early years of his life as he ventured from room to room, with an array of emotions tumbling back.

"You're always in your head trying to change things," he said of his life, and yet he aims "to leave this earth with as few regrets as possible."

He remembered how damp their old home was, and "how dirty we were."

"There were ruptures in our skin that were unknown to medicine," he said.

Gerry Lillis, 86, who attended Leamy's school, said Frank "was a brainy man, a little bit brainier than the rest of us."

"It's a little bit better

than what we lived in really. We were rock bottom. You could be up for cruelty now if you put a horse in the houses we lived in," he said.

Outside American tourists posed with a bust of McCourt, and took photos, in a homage to the tourist industry which has built up around Limerick's only Pulitzer Prize winning author.

Mick O'Donnell, the walking tour guide of Angela's Ashes, said the museum will be a focal point and a "bonus" for those going on the tour.

Built in 1843, Leamy's closed as a school in 1952 and has since re-opened as an art gallery, creative writing centre and now a museum.

Sitting in the teacher's chair at the top of the class in the gallery room, Malachy's voice boomed: "Cuinas", ushering the crowd to be quiet, and began his address with "Limerick friends and fellow blow-ins."

"Frank, welcome to your new Limerick home,"

he said. However, he struggled to predict how his late brother might feel about this honour, saying Frank's work was his pleasure, not "outside adulation".

"He would be either highly amused or highly embarrassed," he said with a laugh.

"Frank always wanted to be remembered as a teacher - not of facts, not of figures, not of grammar, not of punctuation, but for a love of words."

"He hoped that no child would ever despair of being able to rise out of any desperate situation."

He said Frank's "spirit never left this place and will always linger here", noting that his brother once said: "Limerick is in my bones, just like my marrow and it will always be there. So in his own way he loved Limerick"

Limerick, Malachy said, is an "exasperating place" and "has its snobs, with tuppence halfpenny looking down on tuppence."

But it also has

compassion, generosity and decency, he added. "Remember you can rise from the ashes," he told the crowd.

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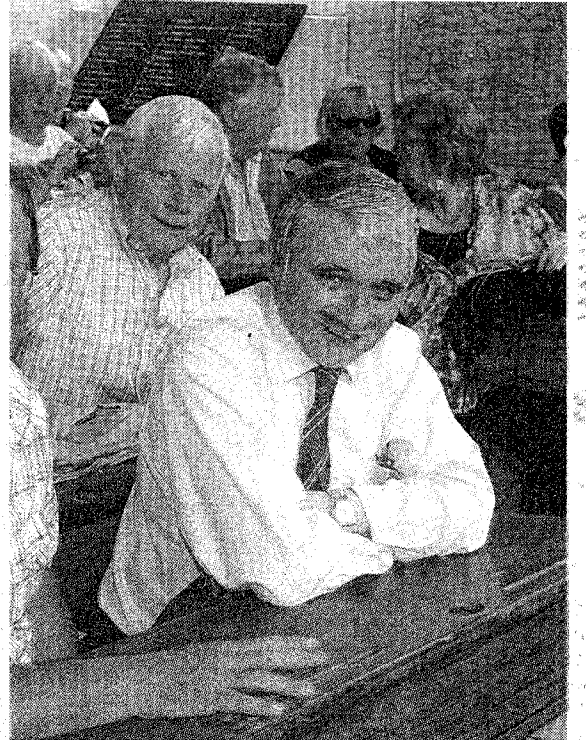
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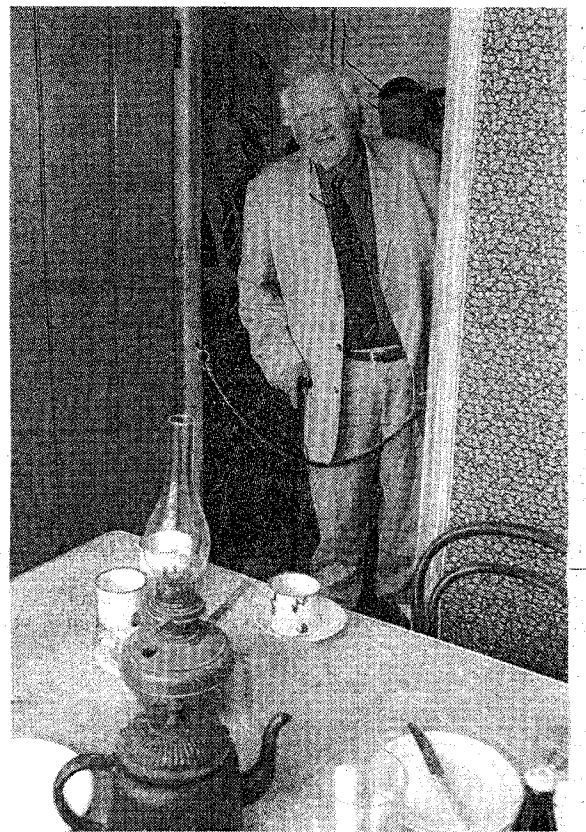
In fact, she received so much that she had to donate some of the items to Saint Vincent de Paul.

There is a €3 entry charge to the museum.

SEE ELLEN MCCOURT INTERVIEW IN LEADER 2



Top of the class: Willie O'Dea sits in the front row at Leamy's during Malachy McCourt's address



Malachy McCourt surveys one of the rooms in the Frank McCourt museum. PICTURE: LIAM BURKE/Press 22

## New awards to celebrate the deaf

Donal O'Regan

A KILMALLOCK man is one of the people behind a new awards initiative that highlights the achievements of those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The first awards of its kind will celebrate those who have made a significant contribution to their society, community,



Kevin Mulqueen, Kilmallock, Dr Nina Byrnes and Stephen Leddy

celebrate their success and triumphs," said Mr Mulqueen.

There are eight award categories in total, according to Mr Mulqueen.

"They are social contribution, workplace, youth, grandparent, sportsperson, media and lifetime achievement award," he said.

Stephen Leddy,

to negatively impact your life by showcasing the significant achievements from around the country. I'd encourage anyone who wants to nominate their 'hero' to log onto www.hiddenhearing.ie and tell us why they deserve an award."

Submissions can be made by email, post or by sign language through video. You can request

## Cyclists going an extra kilometre

Petula Martyn

CYCLISTS are going an extra kilometre for charity in the Broadford 125 + 1 Kilometre Cycle.

The group of 40 cyclists, who are all from the Clare community, are taking to the saddle and going the distance to raise €10,000 for The Mid Western Cancer Foundation, at the

members and friends receiving treatment at the regional hospital in Dooradoyle.

"Cancer has hit a lot of people in the local area. We're all touched by it," he said.

The cyclists will leave Broadford at 9am on Saturday, August 13, and travel to Ennis via Tulla. The group will



# Malachy returns to open museum dedicated to brother Frank

MALACHY McCourt returned to his native city to open the museum dedicated to his brother Frank, and which features a replicate bedroom of the family's tenement home in Roden Lane.

The McCourt brothers resided only a short distance away from the museum, located at the former Leamy's School in Hartstonge Street.

Malachy, aged 79 and aided by walking sticks, told the gathering that Frank, author of Angela's Ashes, would have

been delighted with the museum dedicated to his memory.

Fame, he said, was never in Frank's mind, and he preferred to be known as a teacher rather than an author or celebrity.

Frank and himself, he continued, left Limerick in complete anonymity, carrying with them a sense of range, injustice, poverty and uncaring bureaucracy.

The museum, the brainchild of John and Una Heaton, is one of the most popular attractions in

the area, and was designed to recreate the Limerick described in Angela's Ashes.

Its hoped the ongoing popularity of the book will help the museum to become one of the most popular tourist attractions in the city.

Frank McCourt died after an illness two years ago.

Riverdance composer Billy Whelan, who was born 200 yards from Leamy's School, in Barrington Street, was among the attendance.



Malachy McCourt pictured at the opening of the Frank McCourt museum on Thursday in Limerick with Una Heaton, Dorothy Cantrell, and Willie O'Dea, TD.

## Regional roads discussed with NRA

A NUMBER of regional Limerick roads that are badly in need of work were discussed in a meeting between Deputy Patrick O'Donovan and the NRA this week.

Among the routes discussed were the N21 Limerick to Tralee, the N24 Limerick to Waterford, the N20 Limerick to Cork and the N69 Limerick to Listowel.

"Obviously we are living at a time when every cent has to be put to as much use as possible but that doesn't mean we should lose sight of the importance of our national roads network and the further development of our region's infrastructure," said Deputy O'Donovan.

"I was encouraged by what I have seen and am confident that the NRA have the best interests of our region in mind as they plan for the future".

## Answers sought to volume of PPS numbers

THE Limerick FF spokesperson on Environment, Community and Local government, Niall Collins, is this week questioning the government regarding the alarming number of PPS numbers active within

during a debate on the Electoral Amendment Bill last week. The fact that we have more than 2.6 million extra PPS numbers provides enormous scope for abuse of the system".

The deputy is seeking answers from

## Piping, glassware and laptops stolen

EXTENSIVE flood damage was caused to a house on the South Circular Road when copper piping was stolen.

Culprits broke in through a back door and stole the piping, resulting in extensive water damage.

Meanwhile, thieves with an eye for designer glassware broke into a house in Caherdavin.

The residence in Galtee Close was burgled on Sunday, July 17, between 4.35pm and 9.15pm, when the owner returned to find a number of windows broken.

Waterford Crystal wine goblets, a Waterford Crystal vase and €250 cash were taken.

A quantity of prescription drugs were also taken.