

# Statue of murdered Athea missionary to be unveiled

Family of Fr Jerry Roche, murdered in 2009, 'honoured' by bronze bust

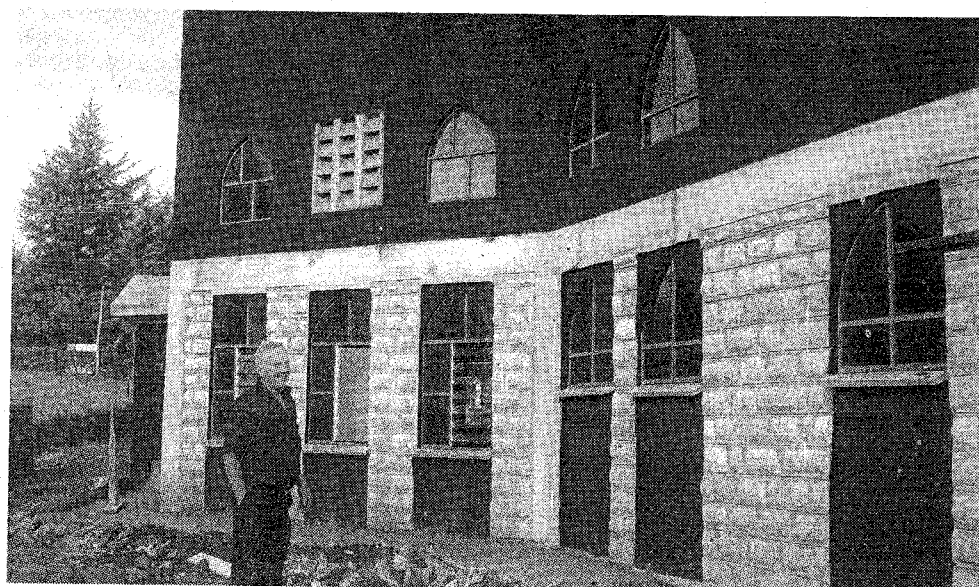
Gerard Fitzgibbon

THE FAMILY of murdered Athea priest Fr Jerry Roche have said that they are "humbled" by the efforts of the local community ahead of the unveiling of a statue in his honour in the village this weekend.

Fr Roche, 68, was brutally murdered during a robbery at his home near Kericho, Kenya in December 2009. A member of the Kiltegan Fathers, he had lived and worked in Africa for 41 years but was due to retire and return home just months before he was killed.

This Sunday, a bronze bust of Fr Roche will be unveiled in the grounds of St Bartholomew's Church following Mass at 2pm. The statue, which depicts Fr Roche holding a Bible, has been sculpted by Valentia artist Alan Ryan Hall and has been paid for thanks to fund raising and donations marshalled by a small committee of locals.

Anne Cunningham, Fr Roche's niece, said that her family were thankful for the "time, effort and dedication" of everyone involved in creating



Athea native Fr Jerry Roche pictured in Kenya before his murder in December 2009

the memorial.

"Fr Jerry loved the people, personalities, music and craic around Athea. His plan was to retire in Athea and spend his retirement there. He would be very honoured and humbled that there would be a memorial as beautiful as this dedicated to him".

In September, three men were sentenced to death in a Kenyan court for Fr Roche's murder. However Fr Roche's family have asked for mercy for Isaac Kipng'etick Bett, Jackson Cheruiyot Koskei and Joshua Maranga Makori, stating that their hangings "will not bring Jerry back".

It is understood that an appeal by the three men against their convictions is currently pending, and will not likely be heard until next year.

Mike Woulfe, a member of the Fr Roche statue committee, said that Jerry was an incredibly popular member of the Athea community, who frequently

visited home, and is still sorely missed.

"He was never afraid of death. But his dream was to be back in Athea and have a little house where people could call to him, have a chat and sing a song. That dream was robbed from him.

"[The statue] will be a great compliment to his family. They've had a difficult two years. But this will be a fitting tribute".

Fr Roche served as a missionary in Kenya and Somalia for 41 years. Before his murder, he was bequeathed a small cottage in Athea and had been in the process of renovating it ahead of his planned retirement in early 2010.

Ms Cunningham said that her family are "very grateful that people have made it possible for us and future generations to be reminded of him in such a fitting way.

"It allows us to remember the sincerity, integrity and simplicity by which he lived his life, and which clearly inspired others"

## Top economist at Chamber lunch

Mike Dwane

THE Limerick man who had a ringside seat in the events leading up to the EU/IMF bailout has been named as guest speaker at this year's Shannon Chamber Christmas lunch.

Economist Dr Alan Ahearne was appointed special adviser to former Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan in March 2009. Since March of this year, Dr Ahearne has been a

member of the board of the Central Bank, one of the last appointments made by the late politician on leaving office.

Damian Gleeson, president of Shannon Chamber, is expecting yet another "insightful, pertinent and absorbing" presentation for the lunch at Dromoland Castle on Friday, December 16. Former speakers at the event have included Brian Cowen as Taoiseach and Ryanair chief executive

Michael O'Leary.

Shannon Chamber President's Lunch commences with registration at 12.15pm. Tickets are available by calling 061 708341; by emailing [hdownes@shannonchamber.ie](mailto:hdownes@shannonchamber.ie) or [jfinucane@shannonchamber.ie](mailto:jfinucane@shannonchamber.ie).

The lunch is open to members and non-members alike but space is limited and early booking is advised to avoid disappointment.

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RETAIL EXCELLENCE

## County prepared for severe weather incidents

Norma Prendiville

THIS week's low temperatures have brought back memories of last winter's Big Freeze when many county roads were ice-bound and many households found themselves house-bound, low on supplies and often without water as pipes froze or as water-supply was restricted.

But, says Paul Crowe, director of services for roads with Limerick County Council, the county is adequately prepared for all eventualities this winter.

Speaking last Friday at the launch of Severe Weather

received "significantly more" supplies of rock salt this year than in previous years. And he explained that the council's Major Emergency Plan includes a sub-plan to deal with severe weather incidents. The council also an inter-agency Flood Plan, drawn up in the aftermath of flooding incidents in the county in 2008 and 2009.

The online Severe Weather Guide is intended to complement these county-wide plans and give advice to householders and businesses on how to prepare for severe weather periods and how to handle emergencies



Severe weather a risk: Cathaoirleach Mary Harty

premises. "If the clearing is done in such a way as it doesn't create a hazard, liability should not arise," he told the Limerick Leader.

It was his understanding, he said, that groups of landowners could help clear roads also as long as they didn't create a hazard. Last year, some farmers/landowners who wanted to spread grit on small, country roads felt unable to do so because of the risk of liability.

During the cold spell between November 27 and December 26 last year temperatures dropped

3,500-kilometre network of roads was badly affected but maintaining the national routes were the priority, followed by regional and then county roads. The council also struggled to maintain water supply - leading to restricted supply in some areas, particularly Abbeyfeale.

Cathaoirleach Mary Harty appealed to members of the public and business community to visit [www.lcc.ie](http://www.lcc.ie), and to brief themselves on the featured advice and information. "Severe weather poses a significant risk to both life and property and it's incumbent on everyone to