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lessons every week. She even passed up the chance of a holiday with her friends at the Rehab day care centre to prepare for the Junior Cert, but it was all worth it in the end.

"I wasn't really nervous sitting the exam but I was delighted when I got the results," Frances continued. "Now I'm going to try for an NCVA in art," she added.

Frances sat the exam in Catherine McAuley school as an external student and was the only person in the school to sit the honours paper.

She regularly attends the Rehab Centre in John Street which helps people with learning difficulties identify their goals and offers them any assistance

By MIKE DORAN

THE Abbey River is as dry as a bone—but alas, the exposure of the slimy river bed owes more to a feat of engineering than to an improvement in the weather.

For the Corporation have blocked it as part of a project to augment Baals Bridge as part of the new northern ring road system. The flow now backs into the Shannon.

According to the Corporation's Seamus Ryan, chief project engineer for the operation, the £2.3m job requires the pouring of hundreds of tonnes of stone fill into the river to shore it up like a dam.

The fill also acts as a support for the shuttering decks used to support the new bridge, which will

have a span of 35 metres over the river and an 8-metre span across Sir Harry's Mall.

Archaeological investigations have also been going ahead in the area, with some interesting finds. Already, bodies and ancient artifacts have been located and stores in a Corporation unit at the Granary Workspace on Michael Street.

Although the replacement of the bridge will be completed soon enough, the river is expected to be kept dry for further archaeological investigations expected to go on until the new year.

In addition, the drying of the river bed facilitates the Abbey River stage of the £100m Limerick City and Environs Main Drainage Scheme, which is also expected to start soon.

For this part of the huge operation, a main sewer pipe will run down the bed

of the Abbey River, with dozens of existing sewerage outlets connecting into it.

Such a job is necessary as an astonishing six million tonnes of raw sewage runs into the Shannon Estuary every week from Limerick City alone, with a lot of it flowing into the Abbey River.

The plan is to run the main sewer pipe as far as the grounds of the cement factory, where a waste transfer plant is going to be built.

The developments along the Abbey River will have benefits ranging wider than just for sewerage and archaeology. A weir is expected to be built along the river walls, allowing for the movement of more pleasure boats up the river. Some have even suggested that George's Quay will become the new "left bank" of Limerick.



Shored up: a dried-out Abbey River this week

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