

# Remembering a Limerick institution

■ It's 25 years since the Woolworth's store in Limerick shut and staff from the 'forerunner to the pound shop' met recently to share memories

Alan Owens

**M**ANY people have a crystal clear memory of the Woolworths Department Store that used to inhabit the Williamscourt Mall now anchored by restaurants; others have but a fuzzy memory of pressing their face up against the glass, of the massive sweet counter and the latest toys that were contained within, like treasures waiting to be ripped open.

The store was an iconic one, a Limerick "institution". Unfortunately, it closed 25 years ago this year, while the final remaining Woolworths store in Ireland closed this year, ending a long association of the chain with these shores.

Last Saturday night, a group of former workers from the Limerick store gathered in the Bailey Bar for a reunion, with some travelling from outside Limerick and from as far as the UK.

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"You went in the main entrance and the first thing that would greet you would be the sweets on display in

Above: an overview of the store that had everything

Above right: Woolworth's as viewed from the outside on William St

PICTURES: COURTESY SEAN CURTIN PUBLICATIONS





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**- Fergus South**

the girls came in - we hadn't  
 seen a lot of people in years,"  
 explained Limerick man Fergus  
 South this Wednesday, who  
 worked in "stock control" in the  
 O'Connell Street store in the  
 late 1970s.

"We had a 15 year reunion  
 and we had another one five  
 years ago in Schooners. The  
 main organisers were Anne  
 Franklin, who is married to Pat  
 Franklin of the shoe repair  
 shop in Catherine Street and  
 Lilly Allen, who is a sister of  
 Dennis Allen who composed  
 Limerick You're A Lady.

He added: "There was a lot  
 of swapping of stories, there  
 was a great community spirit  
 among the staff and there still  
 is".

The store was a forerunner  
 to the more modern Euro  
 stores, Fergus believes.

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 Shop probably," he explained.

"You went in the main  
 entrance and the first thing  
 that would greet you would  
 be the sweets on display in  
 big open top counters, a lot  
 of people used to pick up  
 sweets. There was all sorts  
 of electrical stuff, records -  
 everything you needed you  
 would get in Woolworth's."

There are many fond  
 memories from the "pre-  
 Celtic Tiger days" working  
 in the store and Fergus  
 said there was a good rap-  
 port with management.

Fergus hopes that the

**Above: an overview of the store that had everything**

**Above right: Woolworth's as viewed from the outside on William St**

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former employees will  
 meet up again before  
 Christmas, and fully  
 intends to see another  
 reunion happen for the  
 30th anniversary of the  
 closing of the shop, of  
 which little trace remains,  
 except in old photographs  
 and the memories and  
 reminiscences of those that  
 worked there.



Lilly McGrath, Thomondgate, and Mary McInerney, Ballysimon, at the staff reunion last weekend



Fergus South, Fedamore, and Mabel Mullane, Norwood, enjoying the Woolworth staff reunion in the Bailey



Catherine Liston, Rosbrien, and Denise McMahon, Corbally, at the Woolworth staff reunion



Eileen Higgins, Westbury, and Caroline Driver, London, met up at the Woolworth staff reunion in the Bailey Bar



Anne Franklin, Corbally, and Theresa McDonagh, Caherdavin, at the staff reunion in the Bailey Bar



Mary Allen, Old Cork Road, and Mary Grant, Janesboro, at the Woolworth staff reunion in the Bailey Bar



Marie Fitzgerald, Garryowen, and Geraldine Lacey, Glasgow Park, at the reunion

PICTURES: DAVE GAYNOR

# Limerick Women's Network state their case against McCarthy cuts

Nick Rabbitts

set up a network to help with the issues identified

I have enjoyed

ick have the highest rate of self-harm in Limerick. We budget to the core. We have changed our premises