



THE CLINTON VISIT

Limerick welcomes the US President



Stephen O'Donoghue, Keith Fitzmaurice, Shane O'Donoghue, Niamh Foley and Tanya Considine, in Adare. (BI)



Limerick's First Lady: Hillary Clinton holds up the statue of Dromcollogher Dresden presented to her to mark her visit to Limerick.

Day Adare's hope sprung eternal . . .

By **NORMA PRENDIVILLE**

HOPE ran high in Adare that the man from Hope, President Bill Clinton would stop for a minute or more on his way into or out of the Adare Manor Hotel where he stayed on Friday night.

Three times the crowds gathered—on Friday evening, early on Saturday morning and again on Saturday afternoon.

And three times, the crowds glimpsed a presi-

dential head and wave—but the longed-for walkabout with its chance to say hello and shake a presidential hand was not to be.

The party atmosphere however remained undented, particularly on Friday evening.

Children, many with flags, cheered for the television cameras, cheered for the Garda cars, cheered for the helicopters. The biggest cheer they reserved however for the presidential limousine.

"I saw him. He waved," said one onlooker. "You would know by the head of him."

"It was worth it," declared another of her



Stars and stripes greet the US President to the city.

long wait. "The excitement."

"Do we have to go home now after this?" one child asked.

"Will he get out?" was the question on everyone's lips.

When he didn't, the hope was still there for the morning, when some people began gathering at the gates of the hotel as early as 7am.

Bridie Dunne, from Ballingarry, arrived in Adare shortly after 7am on Saturday, determined to get a good position from which to see and hopefully meet President Clinton.

"I saw JF Kennedy in the racecourse in Limerick in 1963," she said. "I saw Jackie, too, and the Pope and Mother Teresa."

Brigid King had visited the White House and was

determined to get close to the President.

Children too were among the early arrivals. Sean Casey, 13, from Croom had stayed with his school pal Donal Murray from Adare just to be on the spot.

The night before they stood at Lantern Lodge to wave welcome. Now they were in prime position, yards from the Manor gates.

"It is once-in-a-lifetime chance to see a US President," said Donal.

The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, arrived at 9.45 to great cheers.

Even the torrential rains failed to deter them and as the skies cleared shortly after 10am hope rose again that he would surely stop to say hello.

By 10.55, when Bertie's

car re-emerged, that hope grew stronger. We knew now what to expect: lots of outriders, lots of other cars.

"It was the colour and razzmatazz," stated Mary O'Shea, Adare. Besides, she added: "he has done great things for the North."

Her friend Mary O'Donoghue thought it was all brilliant. They were heading home to change from their rain-soaked clothes but they would be back again later.

"We saw more of him last night," Noel Hartnett said. Still, neither he nor his wife Eileen would have missed the opportunity.

"We will never again get a chance like this," declared Helen Curtin. "No other American president will come to this village."

Then, shortly after 1pm, the crowds materialised

again. This time, they lined the Main Street. As the riders heralded the arrival of the President, a strange hush fell over the crowd.

As the clapping broke out, the Presidential limousine slowed down. Slow and slower. Hope sprung alive again.

Right through V Limerick, the crowd turned out to greet him every junction in the small and big knots of people gathered and waved.

For mile after mile through Cross Rathkeale, Reens P Coolanoran, Newcastle West, Barna, Dev Cross, Templeglantine, Abbeyfeale—the President.

But the man from Hope didn't stop.



Marie and Sarah Mulvihill wait for President Clinton to pass through Newcastle West.