

## The Story of Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto Blackrock

Do you know that 2008 is the fiftieth anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of our grotto in Blackrock? On the 26th of March 1958, a meeting was called in the Blackrock Rowing Club by a group of local people to erect a grotto. They invited the various organisations within the parish to attend. As a result, a committee was formed with Michael Sheehan as Chairperson, Breda Kelly as Hon. Secretary and Martha Moynihan as Treasurer. 35 more volunteers made up the group and they duly set about their objective.

A site was acquired at the end of the Marina (just above where the fishermen kept their boats in the winter time). The Cork city gardener, one Mr Gallagher was invited to attend one of the meetings and he gave some ideas on what style of Grotto to erect. He was always available to lend his advice whenever it was required.

The volunteers divided themselves into different groups. Each group was allocated a different section of the parish which they targeted to raise funds via a door to door collection. A tractor was hired at a cost of five pounds. This was used to draw stone which would ultimately be used in the construction of the grotto.

At a meeting held in the Blackrock Rowing Club dated July 8th 1958, it was agreed to lay the foundation stone. One week later, Hon. Secretary Breda Kelly proudly announced that "building works have commenced" as the first foundation stone was laid.

Initially, work progressed very speedily. Two lorries were hired at a cost of 20 shillings to aid the construction and the main statue was ordered from Denis McCarthy of White Street. Materials were purchased from William Ellis & Sons. However, this progress was short-lived.

With the tractor out of action and unable to source another one, progress halted! Frustration grew and this resulted in a drop in volunteer numbers. Eventually, after a couple of months, a new tractor was hired at a cost of seven and six an hour. With optimism now galvanised, another door to door collection was held and a dance was organised in the Cork Boat Club. Thanks to the likes of David Cummins, Eddie Beale, John O'Leary, Jack Aherne, Tom Cashman, John Dorney, Tom O'Sullivan, J. Twomey, Maria Dorney, Ann Beale, Mrs O'Keefe, Ann O'Connell and Chris Aherne (and many others); the Grotto was now becoming very much a reality!

The reality came into being on Wednesday September 28th 1960, when the Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto was officially opened and blessed by Rev Fr Aherne, ably assisted by Fr Cummins and Fr Crowley. It took two and half years from start to finish and one hundred and five meetings were held by the committee in the Blackrock Rowing Club during this time. The sense of achievement for all involved was very much evident that day. As the saying goes,

"Many of us are more capable than some of us...but none of us is as capable as all of us"

*Frank Fitzgerald*

