

**FAMINE GRAVEYARD**  
 ONE OF THREE GRAVEYARDS OPENED SHORTLY BEFORE AND DURING THE FAMINE OF 1845-49. HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE MOSTLY CHILDREN AND THE ELDERLY WERE BURIED HERE AFTER DYING OF HUNGER AND ILLNESS IN THE WORKHOUSE DURING THE FAMINE



Rose McPadden, founder of the Famine Graveyard  
 Photos: Tony Fahy



*I gcumáine na ndaoine a fuair bás i dTeach na mBocht, Uininnín, agus a cuireadh ar an lathair seo, amair an Ghorta Mhór 1845-49 agus ina dhiaidh sin*

In memory of those who died in Manorhamilton Workhouse during the Great Famine 1845-49, and thereafter who were buried in this place

*I lonta Dé go geastar sinn*



**FEVER HOSPITAL**  
 THE FEVER HOSPITAL WAS BUILT IN 1850 AS A RESPONSE TO THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC OF 1832 AND THE FAMINE OF 1845-49. THE WORKHOUSE WAS BUILT IN 1842. BY THE HEIGHT OF THE FAMINE IT HAD MORE THAN A THOUSAND INMATES. THE HOSPITAL STANDS ON ITS SITE



*Famine Pot*  
 Donated by Mary, John, Adrian, & Kieran O'Flynn

# ROSE MCPADDEN

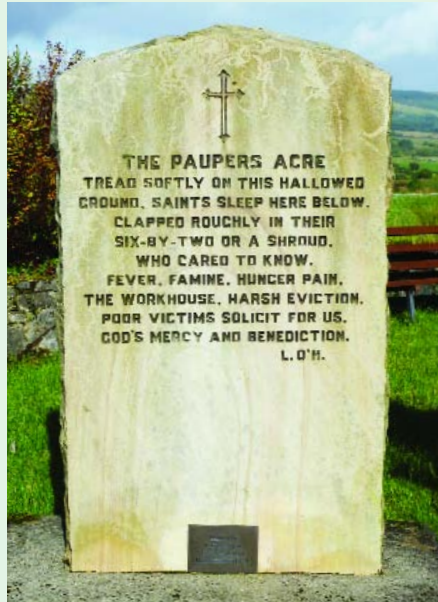
## *Prin Duignan*

ROSE MCPADDEN was sixteen when she got a job as wards maid in the TB sanatorium, as it was then called, in Manorhamilton. Her work included helping out in the laundry, scrubbing sheets and boiling and bleaching them with Lysol, an antiseptic disinfectant which was introduced into hospitals in the 1930s. Rose's immediate boss was Mother Laurence who belonged to the Mercy Order which first came to the old workhouse in the 1890s. Mother Laurence was a tall, reserved woman, stern in her dealings with the staff, insisting among other things that they all eat porridge with cream in the morning before starting work, something that was not to the liking of everyone!

On one occasion she told Rose she needed her help and the ensuing task made a lasting impression on the young girl's mind:

'I remember the day so well when Mother Laurence asked me to accompany her to the graveyard. She had a garden spade and a little butter box made of wood. She told me the box contained the body of a child who had died at birth in the old hospital. She dug a little hole while I held the box. We placed the baby in her resting place and she and I stood side by side and prayed for the infant and the bereaved mother. I think this happened in 1952 but I cannot be sure of the date'.

The graveyard was just a few yards away to the rear of the 'sanatorium'. Many other babies were buried in this plot over the years and indeed the little mounds, over the shallow graves, are still visible. Rose recalls that wet sheets from the hospital were often spread over them to dry out in the good weather. It would appear that no religious ceremony with



the attendance of a priest or minister, accompanied the burials.

Three small graveyards are marked on the Ordinance survey map of the old workhouse site although another plot containing graves is believed to lie near the boundary wall on the east side of the present Our Lady's Hospital. Most of the burials date back to the famine of 1845-49 although some others, including those of 'paupers' whose families couldn't afford the funeral expenses, were also buried in these plots.

In 1955 Rose married Myles McPadden and they reared a family of eleven children. Myles was the hospital gardener and for a time the duty of burying still-born infants fell to him. He proved a great help to Rose when in 1986 she came up with the idea of clearing and cleaning the graveyard which by then was covered in rushes, briars and overgrown hedges. Her idea coincided with her becoming president of the local ICA guild, an organisation which warmly supported this initiative. Manorhamilton ICA established in 1945 with Mrs Lily O'Hagan as first president, had been a vital contributor over the years to the

enhancement of the social and economic life of the area.

Funds were raised for the project through cake sales, card games, church gate collections and private subscriptions. Two other local guilds, Kinlough and Glenfarne also gave donations. In all £1,137 was collected.

The formal opening and blessing of the graveyard took place on Saturday 27 June 1987 and in her address Rose paid tribute to those who had made donations of statues and remembrance stones, including Lily O'Hagan, Sister Dolores, Tommy McFadden, Patricia McPadden, Margaret Granaghan and John Beirne. She also acknowledged the work of her husband Myles, John Maguire and Paddy McEaney.

Since that day in 1987 work is ongoing in maintaining the plot and in organising the annual commemoration. Organisations such as the McDermott Residents Committee and the Men's Group give of their time freely and many businesses and individuals such as Trotters' Quarry and the late Felie McManus have generously donated sand and gravel and cut stone.

The Famine Graveyard Project was an inspiration to other communities not only in Leitrim but all over the country. Today it is part of a complex comprising a famine pot and a modern monument which houses the skeletons which were uncovered during the building of the present HSE headquarters. The old Fever Hospital which dates back to 1850 serves as a backdrop to this place of pilgrimage. The Famine Graveyard itself is no longer overgrown wasteland but a beautiful green area where many come to honour the voiceless victims of the famine, the tiny infants lying in unmarked graves and the abandoned poorest of the poor.