

na mBláth for the Michael Collins tribute



Part of the large gathering at the annual Béal na Bláth commemorations over the weekend.

Picture: Richard Mills

Cllr Colm Burke was also present as was former Labour councillor and now member of Fine Gael Jim O'Callaghan.

After the speeches, Cork South West TD Jim O'Keeffe posed for a photograph with the party leader. Not to be outdone, former TD and hopeful candidate Paddy Sheahan stood for several photographs.

Members of Cork County Council there included Cllr Derry Canty, Cllr Tomas Ryan, Cllr Jim Daly, Cllr Tim Lombard, independent Cllr Noel Collins and election candidate Cllr Gerry Kelly.

Former County Mayor Cllr Michael Creed was also among the crowd, as was the former Mayor of Limerick city, Diarmuid Scully, and Senator Paul Bradford.

Among the strong contingent from Midleton were Cllr Mary Woods and former councillor Kathleen Woulfe.

No doubt there were plenty of other politicians among the large crowd. For all these people, Béal na mBláth has a special significance, that draws them back year after year.

As Deputy Kenny put it in his

oration yesterday: "We meet here in the dust, the earth of West Cork. It's the dust, the earth that gave life to Miceal O'Coileain. The dust, the earth that called him home, here, in death."

Speaking after yesterday's commemoration, Deputy Kenny said that Michael Collins has been a personal inspiration to him and will continue to be during the election campaign ahead.

"I have had a portrait of him in my office for many years now," he said.

Deputy Kenny added that the entire Béal na mBláth area has a special resonance for him.

"There is something special about this entire area — the people and the community believe in the Collins legacy," he said.

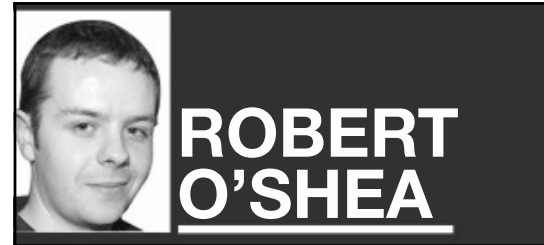
Perhaps the last word should go to Frank Metcalfe, a leading light on the organising committee for this event for many years.

"Over the year, the legacy of Michael Collins has fascinated people, not just in Ireland but across the world. Testament to this is the number of visitors here at Béal na mBláth," he said.



Brendan Sullivan, from the Millstreet Pipe Band, listening attentively to Enda Kenny's oration at Béal na Bláth.

Picture: Richard Mills



IT'S not often that a respected newspaper columnist will advocate the use of nuclear weapons. As you might point out yourself, I am no respected newspaper columnist, so I'm going to do just that.

The world-renowned philosopher Jack Handey once said that it was crazy that nuclear weapons were still getting built in this day and age.

He argued we should be getting use out of the ones we have already instead.

I agree, and there are sound educational reasons for doing so. Best of all, no one gets hurt.

Now, I would be the first to hold my hands up and plead my ignorance on the subject of space. Like most people, I feel very humbled by it. But, at the same time, it can feel like an attic you've just never been up to.

While the firmament may seemingly extend into infinity, with billions of stars twinkling down at us, our own little patch — the solar system — has always felt like a neighbourhood to me. Let me stretch that neighbourhood analogy a little too far.

The way I look at it, the Earth is you. Mars is your best buddy, a real stand-up guy.

Then there's Venus. Venus you kissed in the bushes when you were playing hide and seek but she seems to have forgotten.

Christ, though, she's growing up to be a looker.

Mercury is that little twerp always whizzing around on his cool bike. You can't trust Mercury, he's a real tattle-tale.

Jupiter and Saturn are the two big kids in the neighbourhood. You can trust Jupiter, when he's around; he'll stand up for you if you're in trouble, even if he doesn't normally take much notice of you.

Saturn, on the other hand, you've never quite got a fix on. Saturn with her one-liners you don't understand, but are guessing she might be mocking you because of the way Jupiter sniggers.

Who are you Saturn anyway and aren't you a bit old for that skipping rope?

Uranus and Neptune are two guys from the next estate. They're cool enough, but they're always together, thick as thieves. Neptune supposedly got busted for smoking pot a while back.

We all look out for Pluto, the youngest of us. He eats worms sometimes and piddles in the middle of the

green in front of everybody. Last week, things weren't looking good for old Pluto. Looked like he was moving out of the neighbourhood. A group of people were picking on him because of his size, but he seems to have squeezed through on a technicality.

The only problem is that the world's top astronomers only agreed to this if they can slip three more planets in as well.

For generations, schoolchildren were taught that the big yellow thing had nine planets revolving around it. Anyone who could memorise the phrase: "My Very Educated Mother Just Showed Us Nine Planets", could easily remember their names. But last week, a committee of the International Astronomical Union defined "planet" in a way that would take in three more heavenly bodies: Ceres, Charon, and Xena. I don't want to appear too xenophobic here, but even if there is evidence of life found on any of these three, I think they should be looked on as enemy planets.

How are we going to remember them for one thing? "My Very Eccentric Mother Could Just Show Us Naughty Pictures, Censored and X-rated" just hasn't got the same ring to it.

And if Xena turns out to be named after that Warrior Princess woman (you just know it is, don't you — what will be next? The *Ally McBeal* Asteroid Belt) then I think we can discredit most of what astronomers say from now on.

Their new definition might end up making planets out of dozens more rocks out there as well.

So, to the pressing subject at hand: What to do with these three planets, and any others making claims to planethood?

I believe we should blow them up. This enterprise would use up a decent amount of the nuclear arsenal and bring all the people of earth together to face a common foe/piece of rock.

We could get sponsors in for the greatest galactical show ever, easily surpassing a solar eclipse and giving two fingers to the Northern Lights.

A friend of mine asked me this week (he is not an astronomer): "If men are from Mars, and women from Venus, who are from Pluto? Paedophiles?"

If that turns out to be true, I think we should blow up Pluto too.