

**"Make a decision on what you want to do and get down to it."  
- Patrick Scott**

## TK WHITAKER

Visionary who ushered in better standard of living for all

**T**HE man who unarguably laid the foundation that finally brought Ireland into the 20th Century, when he wrote the First Programme for Economic Expansion in 1958. He was the youngest ever secretary of a government department when he was appointed secretary of the Department of Finance at the age of 39, and when he produced his plan two years later, he argued for an end to protectionism, then regarded as essential for Ireland's survival, and for a move away from dependence on agriculture. The two prongs heralded an end to Ireland's isolation, and were doubly extraordinary coming from a civil servant: prior to Whitaker, and indeed since, no civil servant has had the power, or perhaps the vision, to challenge the political orthodoxy of the day and persuade his political masters that an abandonment of vested interests could be achieved to the benefit of all. Whitaker did so, opening Ireland not just to goods from other countries, but to international ways of thinking, and paving the way for a standard of living for everyone that went beyond the "simple frugality" enforced by de Valera's moral and economic protectionism. Had there been more men like him in the civil service in the years since, we would undoubtedly not be in our current mess.



## Sir ANTHONY O'REILLY

Rugby icon who used teamwork to build business success



**A**N extraordinary, larger-than-life figure who embodies what used to be called in the 18th Century the "Corinthian ethic". The Corinthians excelled in everything they touched, and were expected to touch most things: they were skilled sportsmen and athletes; academically gifted; widely read and versed in ancient philosophy; aware of the arts; patrons where they could afford to be; and pluralist in their political outlook. They were also expected to be ethically above reproach. It was a tall order, and many of those who have earned the title were only trotting after Tony O'Reilly. He was the first young Irish businessman to gain an international reputation as Ireland stepped from isolation in the Sixties. On his own admission, he used his extraordinary sporting prowess on the rugby field to empower his approach to business: rugby teamwork, he believed, was the source of the sense of collegiality he brought to business. His sense of patriotism has been unflagging throughout his long career, from his steering of the Ireland Funds to his determination against all the odds (and some would say, common sense) to keep Waterford going as an iconic Irish brand. And to do this with his own rather than public money is the ultimate patriotism of "putting your money where your mouth is", even at huge cost to yourself.

## BOB GELDOLF/ JOHN O'SHEA

Truculent humanitarian campaigners whose work has saved thousands of lives

**I**'VE put them together because they work in the same field, although they are obviously very different in their approaches to the work. But both of them are extraordinary, passionate humanitarians who have not merely contributed hugely to the fight against injustice and hunger, but have shown themselves to be inspirational people by doing so. Geldof galvanised the world with Live Aid, harnessing what he knew, the world of pop music, to help people dying of starvation. And he didn't walk away; he has remained involved for more than 20 years, working quietly and actively on individual projects for long periods, which involves, one imagines, considerable cost to himself in time sacrificed from his musical and business career. And his obviously rational, intelligent analysis stops the powerful in their tracks and makes them listen. His charity work is far more than a series of photo opportunities.

John O'Shea is awkward, difficult, and truculent. He takes no prisoners, and possibly alienates as many people as he engages. But he gets things done, and is prepared to castigate the great and the ungood without fear or favour. His organisation, Goal, is probably directly responsible for saving many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lives.

Both men display the single-minded anger of great love, deeply moving and admirable.



## JOHN BANVILLE

Writer who transcends national bounds to deal with universal issues

**T**HE Irish writer who breaks the mould. Irish writers are widely acclaimed throughout the English-speaking world (and elsewhere: a lot of them make quite a lot of money from translations of their works) but most of them, from poetry, through literary fiction and into romantic/chicklit work, write in a way that is recognisably Irish. Whether deliberate or not, their work is what the world expects from Irish writers. Banville is different. His work has a universality that transcends Irishness. He is perhaps the literary novelist par excellence, his books, even when set in specific places, concerned with themes that live in our innermost thoughts, sometimes unrecognised, certainly often unacknowledged. Each of his novels casts a uniquely clinical, sometimes judgemental, eye on the human condition and leads his readers along a very briar-strewn path until they (reluctantly in some cases) reach the altar of renewed self-knowledge. There is nothing comfortable, or what is usually called "redemptive", in John Banville's work. It is as icily demanding as it is powerfully rewarding. And Banville also seems indifferent to fame or acclaim, something which is also almost unique in our navel-watching national psyche. By concentrating on what goes on in our heads, John Banville's books use the whole world as their patch.



David Conarty



## MARY ROBINSON

Ability to marry intellectual gifts with force of will to achieve the extraordinary

**D**IGNITY. Intellect. Achievement. Integrity. These are all words that must apply to people on a list of the "greatest". And Mary Robinson has them all. Lucky enough to have been born with huge intellectual capabilities, she has used them to the ultimate, achieving extraordinary things by sheer force of will and commitment. As UN Human Rights Commissioner she was unique as an Irish person in incurring the loathing of the United States administration, something she remained indifferent to, and indeed which she largely managed to circumvent in her work on behalf of the dispossessed of the world. She speaks only when she has something to say, and her passionate conviction is as staunch as it is unyielding: she is never selective in her fight for human rights. And where admirable people are not always "nice", Mrs Robinson has more than a fair share of charm and humour.