



Dying wish comes true for teacher

- ALAN O'KEEFFE

SCHOOLCHILDREN in Africa will honour an Irishwoman whose tragic death led to a big increase in help for their education.

A memorial plaque for Barbara Gill will be unveiled in a new secondary school in a district of Eritrea on October 27.

Barbara was 49 when she was killed after being struck by a lorry while cycling in Dublin. Her ambition had been to help build a school for children in an impoverished Eritrean community.

Barbara had visited the east Africa region with the Irish charity Self-Help Development International.

She had a particular interest in education as her career involved training Irish teachers on third world issues. Friends and family decided to continue a fundraising drive started by Barbara to build a badly-needed secondary school in a remote Eritrean district.

Barbara and her partner, Ruth O'Dwyer, lived together near Castlecomer,

Co Kilkenny, and had rejoiced in the birth of their baby son, Stephen, a short time before her death.

OUTPOURING

A huge outpouring of support ensued after her funeral and more than €100,000 was eventually raised for the project. The school was built thanks to the fund and to the efforts of the local Eritrean community.

Locals helped to dig the foundations for the school and took an active part in completing its construction. Barbara's parents, Bill and Margaret Gill, will leave their farm in Clonbullogue, Co Offaly, to fly out to Eritrea on October 25 for the ceremony.

The Eritrean Minister for Education may attend.

Bill (77) said Barbara's school project, which will serve more than 1,000 pupils, was a source of comfort to them.

Margaret told the *Herald*: "We will be meeting local people and listening for ways the fund might continue to assist them in providing what they need."

Accommodation near schools is often needed to attract teachers from cities to settle in remote areas with few public services.

FUNDRAISING

The couple will be travelling with members of the Irish charity, which merged recently with Harvest Help in the UK to become Self Help Africa.



TRAGIC: Barbara Gill was killed cycling in Dublin