



Honeymooners help family cross threshold of newly built home

Shane Hickey

in Cape Town

IT wasn't quite the average honeymoon.

Recently married TV3 presenter Colette Fitzpatrick reversed roles yesterday and helped another family over the threshold of their new home.

The journalist took a break while on her South Africa honeymoon with husband Niall McDermott to visit a major charity project outside Cape Town that was completed yesterday by 950 Irish volunteers.

The group were taking part in the eighth "building blitz" by the Niall Mellon Township Trust, constructing 200 houses for around 2,000 locals who have up to now been living in shacks in the Wallacedene township.

Ms Fitzpatrick handed over the keys to one of the houses, named 'Dochas', to Sijaji Zibonele, who will live there with his extended family. She arrived in South Africa last weekend for a delayed honeymoon with Mr McDermott, a freelance director, and travelled to see the charity's work.

"I feel terrible that I have only been here for the past hour. It is absolutely incredible the work that has been done here," she said.

However, her new husband declined the offer of carrying her on his shoulders over the threshold of the new home.

A total of 13 houses, with names such as the 'Auld Triangle' and 'Tir na nOg', were officially handed over to locals yesterday amid emotional scenes after the intensive week of construction.

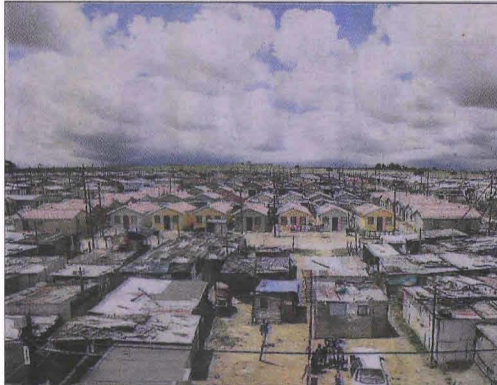
The building had been hampered earlier in the week by bad weather but the work was completed on time, according to the organisers.

The charity has built 12,500 homes in areas around South Africa since it began in 2002.

One of those receiving the new homes, Nosipho Ngenxe, said it will be the first time she will live in a house with running water, electricity and sanitation. "For me and my children, this house means freedom. I have been living in a shack for 11 years. I have my own room, I can have my own bathroom and

my children are safe," she said.

Meanwhile, children dressed in various Irish county and national team colours as a new hall was handed over to the Enkulolekweni primary school, complete with a freshly-laid football pitch and a playground.



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Children wearing Gaelic football shirts celebrate their new pitch at Enkulolekweni primary school; above right, some of the 200 new homes amid the older shacks; right, the volunteers look forward to today's big match. Inset: Colette Fitzpatrick, who took time out from her honeymoon in Cape Town to visit the project. NIALL CARSON/VPA WIRE