

New Garda kit fails to win uniform approval

IT seems as far as rank-and-file gardai are concerned, the cap just doesn't fit.

Yesterday, Garda Commissioner Drew Harris issued a circular to all members, informing them he was introducing a new uniform.

But the main Garda union has attacked the proposed uniform, saying members hate the baseball cap, polo shirt and 'heavy-duty boots'.

In his message, Commissioner Harris said the uniform would be based on the one currently being piloted in Tallaght, Dublin; Henry Street in Limerick; and Bunclody Garda Station in Wexford.

It includes a light blue polo

By **Ali Bracken**
Crime Correspondent

shirt and navy cargo-style trousers. The uniform is a major change from the traditional trousers, shirt and tie uniforms to a more comfortable style.

However, the Garda Representative Association says the new proposed uniform is still inappropriate.

Communications director John O'Keeffe said: 'GRA members have to wear stab vests, carry batons (etc). It... behoves the Commissioner to ensure [these are]... carried safely, comfortably and securely in order that members may carry out their duties effectively.'



Arresting: The new uniform

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

The 33-day Pope who taught the world a smile is the fruit of love

IT was 1978, the year of three Popes. It all began on August 6, when the austere Paul VI died after 15 years as successor to Peter. His final words were the Our Father, and, just as he was pronounced dead, an alarm clock that he had obtained in Poland began to ring.

It was a portentous sign, for the long era of the Polish Pope was nearly upon us. Before that, however, there was the brief Pontificate of a man the world has largely forgotten. Pope John Paul I reigned for 33 days and died 40 years ago this week.

I was only eight years of age in 1978, but my lifelong fascination with the Papacy had already begun. When Paul VI died, I was in England with my grandmother. We were staying with an old aunt who liked to rise before the sun.

On the morning of August 6, I crept into her kitchen only to find her weeping over the sink. Even though it was very early, she was already peeling the potatoes for that day's dinner. 'What's the matter?' I asked, to which she simply sobbed: 'The Pope is dead.'

In the weeks that followed, I marvelled at the Papal funeral, the conclave in the Sistine Chapel and the global excitement as white smoke signalled that a new pontiff had been elected. To my young eyes, it was mystical, beautiful and splendidly solemn. Still, nothing could have prepared me for the vision of that smiling Pope as he waved from the balcony of St Peter's.

John Paul I was a revelation. Here was a Pope whose smile could light up a galaxy. He was self-deprecating, humble and lovable.

Cardinal Albino Luciani – as he was before becoming Pope – wrote fictional letters to famous literary characters, saints, and even to Christ Himself. Those he penned to Dickens, Pinocchio and Mark Twain showed how much he loved classic literature, but also how humorous the new Pope was. His month in office has become known as the 'September Papacy', and was characterised by his deep love for children, his informal style and his constant laughter.

I collected every news item I could on the new Pope. The world

had fallen in love with him, and so had I. When they elected him, he reportedly said: 'May God forgive you for what you have done.' But who could have doubted that he was, in the words of Mother Theresa, 'a sunbeam of God's love shining in the darkness of the world'.

On the morning of Friday, September 29, 1978, I got up early to go to school. As was his custom, my grandfather sat reading in the kitchen. In the background, the radio was playing mournful music.

'Why are they playing that?' I inquired. He looked up from his book with a sombre face and repeated the words my aunt had uttered only weeks before: 'The Pope is dead.' I immediately ran to my parents' room and told my mother, who gave out to me for saying such a terrible thing.

When she realised I was serious, a blackness fell across our home. How could this have happened? How could this smiling saint who had charmed the world be gone after only a month?

John Paul I was like a meteor who briefly blazed into our lives. As the world mourned, there were mutterings about murder and foul play. That such a perfect Pope could have died of natural causes, after so short a time, was simply beyond belief.

FINALLY, I understood why my aunt stood sobbing over her sink on the day Paul VI died. She had loved the old Pope in the same way as I had grown to love the new one. That is why, as I watched the second Papal funeral that year, I did so through a haze of tears.

Two weeks later, the Polish Pope stood where his predecessor had so recently smiled to the world for the very first time. I remembered the story of Pope Paul's Polish alarm clock sounding at the precise moment of his death. Somehow, it now all seemed to make sense.

Pope John Paul II changed the world and became one of the great figures in human history. There is no doubt he was always meant to be Pope. But that does not mean the 'September Papacy' was a glitch of providence.

In a single month, John Paul I taught the world why smiling is the fruit of love.

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