

Press Release

Irish Writers Centre Honours Longford Writers

By Majella Reidy

Longford and creative writing are undoubtedly synonymous with each other. The prestigious works of literary legends Maria Edgeworth, Oliver Goldsmith and Padraic Colum, have greatly influenced many writers throughout the world - and none more so than the prolific writing community now present in the county today.

Such is the calibre of creative writing in Longford that the Irish Writers' Centre (IWC) recently honoured County Longford writers in a special evening at their headquarters in Dublin's Parnell Square.

"In a very small county we have over 100 people actively writing for various reasons. I am convinced that per head of population we have more writers than any other county," said Fergus Kennedy, Longford Arts Officer, speaking at the gathering of Longford writers.

He continued: "Writing is the predominant art form in County Longford and there is a need for further structural supports to assist, in particular, emerging writers. This is where an institution such as the IWC can play a pivotal role."

Jack Harte, chairperson of the IWC, agreed. Addressing the large number of Longford writers, the former Lanesboro resident announced that the IWC would be launching courses and mentoring services online at its website this summer (www.writerscentre.ie). During a discussion session, the writers were invited to express their opinion on how the relationship between the IWC and rural writers could be improved. Areas discussed included; the establishment of regional outreach centres, multiple micro-events and the increased use of IT.

Another potential key link between the IWC and rural writers was seen to be the local writers' groups. Longford County has five such groups, the importance of which could not be overstated, according to Mr. Harte.

"The structure of the local writers' group is a very good one. Maybe we should set up a closer link between these groups and the IWC," he said.

Mr. Kennedy agreed saying that "Local writers' groups should be looking for ways to promote their work (to a wider audience)."

The IWC, which boasts almost 400 members, is home to one of Ireland's most highly valued single art collections - that of Frank Buckley.

Following the discussion, the Longford writers were treated to refreshments. This was followed by a series of readings of self-composed works. Poems, short-fiction and novel extracts were read to great applause.

At the interval, a musical interlude was provided by Longford Larks', a duo comprised of Kevin Farrell (Ardagh), and Aisling McCarthy (Newtownforbes). Together, the musical pair sang songs such as Summertime' and She Moved Through The Fair'.

Following the event, those gathered stepped out into the late Dublin night air and there one writer summed the night up perfectly. He said: "Tonight made me very proud to be from County Longford."

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