

## **Boyne Berries 2 Autumn 2007**

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## **Francis Ledwidge**

A five acre garden, apples, cherries,  
Sunday crowds at ease.  
Children laughing, blackbirds  
sleeping, cherry-drunk.

Matt's fiddle calms you,  
your thoughts read at a glance.  
You walk the tangled roads  
round Slane, dreaming of Ellie.

Homesick in Gallipoli.  
Home-rivers wonder where you are.  
Killed by shrapnel at Ypres.  
Empty roads are grieving.

Matt's grave at Donaghmore,  
Ellie's on the Hill of Slane.  
At Rossnaree I saw you,  
Sleeping by the Boyne.

*Susan Connolly*

## **Dan**

Out front is Dan.  
He heads the hearse.  
He heads all the hearses  
harmless. Funeral processions  
wear him like you would  
a good luck charm.

In the warmth of his cupped hand  
the inverted Woodbine nestles,  
smoke tendrils trickling out  
between brown-stained fingers,  
rising from the soggy cigarette butt  
sucked noisily down  
to its last nicotine drop.

*Michael Massey*

## **The Stream, the Stile & Polly**

The stream that flows past our house at Lackanash makes four right-angled turns before its last gallop between the Newtown road and graveyard, on its way into the more majestic waters of the Boyne at Marcey's hostelry. The first of the stream's turns is opposite my sitting room window and then it strolls to the little bridge at the Newtown road. The bridge is unusual in that it halts the flow and diverts the stream to its left along the northern section of the road for about forty yards when it swings right and under the road.

Just across the road from that bridge a spinster by the name of Polly Cunningham lived in a Parnellite cottage. When in the garden or going to my car I had often noticed her standing at the bridge. Many passers-by and some children sat chatting on the bridge or took refuge when it rained under the canopy of ash enveloping it. But Polly stood out more than anyone, as she always donned black clothes as if she were an old Connemara woman or a Portuguese lady.

In the middle of that bridge was a stile from which led three stone steps, allowing access to a concrete platform from where water could be retrieved. I saw that Polly sometimes descended the steps and at first thought she was coming into my garden for a visit, but no, she quickly retreated up the steps.

Then one morning I saw her again from a closer distance descend the three steps with a bucket in her hand to get some water . . . I thought. Suddenly I saw a plume of ashes and sparks, Polly was barely visible as she climbed back onto the roadway. I went to the bridge to observe the happenings and could see that this was the scene of Polly's ash-pit for a very long time. The hedges, briars, whitethorns, riverbank, bridge – everything – was veiled in

the rakings of Polly's fire. My first thought was to have a word in her ear.

In the next few days I visited Polly, more to test the ground than out of neighbourliness. In the hearth was a cosy turf fire that brightened a dark kitchen, a kitchen that served as a sitting room, living room and utility. I sat on a long bench to the left of the fireplace; it wasn't really a bench, I thought, and on seeing me take stock of it she said, "That's a settle bed." I told her I had heard many stories of the settle bed but never had the pleasure of seeing one. She went on about the tae-man, homeboys, minstrels and labourers who were accommodated on those beds for hundreds of years before. I tempted her further on mentioning that fact that she lived in a Parnellite cottage, "It's no Avondale House" was her instant retort. She gave me a short history of C. S. Parnell and his great peer Michael Davitt; she talked too of Yeats and Synge as well as Jimmy Tully and when winding up her resume she finished in low tones "Ah, yeah, hold a firm grip on your homesteads."

I admired a very old dresser in the room which displayed an array of mugs, cups, jugs, jars, odd plates and large serving dishes. I noticed there was no electricity in Polly's and she made the sweetest tea from her singing kettle which hung on the crook over the fire. The kettle was replenished with water from a tall, white, enamel bucket which was stored in the front porch.

I looked again at the fire and saw two small heaps of ashes on either side. I was half tempted to ask her where she disposed of those ashes but by now I had too much respect for this learned woman whom I could see might not countenance any stranger like me advising her on her ways of life.

In the last seventeen years Polly's cottage has changed on a par with the rest of Ireland. I meanwhile learned that the last

archway through which the stream flowed under the road was of medieval origin and was designed in corbel style, thereby gaining an architectural preservation order.

Of late I had the odd visitor descend the three steps of the bridge, but it was for more for nuisance than admiration of the little spot. I removed the steps but the little bridge still bears the memory of Polly Cunningham, her sister Maggie and brother Paddy. When I saw her funeral cortege pass over the stream on her way to join her siblings in Newtown graveyard, I knew a fire had gone out for the last time, one that had close connections with a time of great historical turbulence including the literary revival movement which produced the great Caitlin Ní Houlihan from the pen of Yeats.

A few days after her funeral, her long-time neighbour, Tom Holland, arrived to my house with a large milk jug decorated with chrysanthemums. He told me Polly gave it to him for me. It now stands on the shelf of my dresser in fond memory of her.

*Louis Moran*

## **The Spell**

Like a witch's cat  
You surface up  
To aid in spells  
Spelling out things  
Spilling out your  
Mewings.

Your body  
Dark and sleek  
Glow, glistens  
In the firelight  
As you peek  
Into the cauldron  
And add your spittle  
To its boiling contents.

Your subtle body  
Moves with stealthy confidence  
Yet—in the firelight  
I can see your  
Tail twitching  
Are you, you too  
Spellbound  
By the spells you  
Help make?

Your gleaming eyes  
Green with envy  
Stare fixedly  
At the flaming shadows  
On the wall  
Your curved claws

Reach out  
To grasp  
And the sound of a  
screech  
resounds in the atmosphere  
--the final ingredient for  
The Spell.

*Soofia Siddique*

## **Closing Scene, Wexford**

An old man, solemn  
as a memorial service,  
is dining alone in the hotel bar  
in a midnight blue tuxedo.

While he waits for waffles  
and ice-cream with hot butterscotch sauce  
he taps one ticket for tonight's production  
against a thinning wedding band,  
marking the cadence of a remembered aria  
shared with a silent partner.

*Andrew Caldicott*

## **Shiver**

We were looking for it. Another segment  
in the ground and run of our being.  
On the beach our dog was simply  
refusing to play with other dogs,  
she just followed us fiddling with her knotted string.  
The day was perfect, dry, full of sunshine  
and the breeze from the north  
skimming waves and skin as we  
turned back facing its vast sting.  
Before the last stretch of sand  
a dog eyed ours and crouched  
staring straight, muzzle between paws,  
ready to spring.  
And she sprang. It could have been an attack.  
We looked at the two of them darting at once  
at full gallop, ours sneaking forth, faster,  
surfing clouds of tawny-grey, legs in a blur.  
The hairs of the fur raised like spikes.  
Challenge, anger and the old, undiluted call of the wild.

We took her back on the leash,  
she was panting,  
she hadn't been reached.  
Touching her neck, her breath on our hand  
we held on to the bright  
fullness of a shiver.

*Davide Trame*

## **Reflective Borders**

We cleaned up our expectations  
and stripped away every garment of the 'self'.  
It took us forever to pack.  
Then, we rode for days and nights,  
went past Trivia and worshipped Diana,  
left back every slight haziness of want.

We are now standing naked,  
bowing towards the pool of Matuta.  
No algae, no foam, no waves, no moss  
no parts floating.  
Yet, I cannot see you next to me.  
I am solely facing the mere reflections of my undressed shape  
soaking.

It seems that  
a few dark drops of doubt  
were enough to colour borders in the water.

And I do not dare to ask,  
Libera, what you can see...  
for it's late  
for it'll soon be too dim for us to care  
about the strange reflections of a pool.  
We rode for days and nights to get here,  
mixing our fate  
and it's too late to ride back.

*Christina Paschali*

## **The Fiancée under Canvas**

(To all the victims of rape in war time)

Run, run, run, I remember my mother screaming  
When I came back from school, I was a beauty during this era of  
madness

A fresh flesh due to satisfy my lover

O poor pearl with all the attributes of happiness

My wedding, how I have imagined it? A magical ceremony

I had the traits of my ancestors:

My lips were two small doors of wisdom

My nose was straight like the mast of the caravels

A brown and oiled skin, last heritage of my Peul and Bantu  
ancestors

O poor pearl with all the attributes of happiness

The smell of sumptuous dishes was escaping

From the improvised kitchen in the forest

The loud laugh of the guests was heard from my bedroom

The fiancée under the canvas was resigned

The warlord was ready to send his troop

To possess the fiancée under the canvas

I had a vision of my youth stolen

My dreams of motherhood were gone.

I can cry I can suffer

But I cannot die

O poor pearl with all the attributes of happiness

Can you really die from the seed of fifty soldiers of peace?

*Landa Wo*

## **Diogenes**

It wasn't a  
Barrel of laughs  
You know,  
Being cooped up  
For hours  
And the dung heap  
Festering.  
You'd never know  
Who'd drop in,  
The cold call  
And then another  
Free lunch  
The reports to  
Be read.  
And the suits  
Were everywhere,  
The accolades!  
The world beating  
Its path  
To your door  
And the dog to  
Be fed.

It was all Greek  
To me.

*Frank Murphy*

## **Black Flying Puppets**

Among the tiny trousers and socks  
piled high in the laundry basket  
just another child's abandoned toy,  
with black shiny plastic wings  
held out as if frozen in a pose.  
We dismiss ugliness with a shrug,  
laugh at pointed teeth, runny eyes:  
boys need imaginary monsters.

But our eyes have betrayed us.  
The figure moves, then takes off  
into flight to join streams  
of shadows dancing together  
on the wing, dark against the sky.  
They came out of an attic  
further down the shore when  
the Morrisons put on a new roof.

As the sky turns into night  
the squeaks of rat-faced babies,  
the thought of them tangling  
in our hair makes us cringe,  
their toxic dirt on our stairs,  
radar crisscrossing the room,  
their smell. Better from afar,  
they swoop and glide in the spectral  
air, the porch light their north star.

*Sandra Bunting*

**Tara Interpreted**  
*(Remembering Emma)*

1991

The credits rolled on the audiovisual.  
Outside again  
we made our own movie.

A small bright face  
squints against the sun.  
She turns and climbs up the hill  
on sturdy six year old legs.

Rolling, rolling,  
on warm, late July grass,  
she lands at the bottom,  
pleased that all four limbs  
have arrived together.

She plays the game of  
again and again.  
Like the children of forever,  
rolling towards her future.

The granite bishop ignores  
a boy riding the ocean waves of history  
on a borrowed chariot  
with mismatched tyres and reversed handlebars.

The small tired family walks towards home  
and rest.  
From central casting thirty sheep  
cross the set and exit stage left.

2004

My hat is pulled down hard,  
my hands plunged into sheltering pockets.  
The slope bears grudging January grass.  
The bishop's stare is rain darkened.

Did she leave any trace here  
of the small child's energy?  
Something to pull her back  
from the clutches of history?

She's nowhere here with the spirits of forever.  
The credits have rolled.  
I turn and head  
for home and rest.

*Catherine Hastings*

## The Blessing

(An extract from the novel, *Madonna of the Fall*)

The granddaughter, Geraldine, came to the door and did the welcoming. Michael shuddered when he saw her, because she had a dry, shrivelled spirituality that could mean only one thing. *Oh God! A failed nun.*

‘Father, it’s good of you to come, father.’

Her voice was humble and anxious, her shoulders ducked with every sentence. More than one duck if the sentence was long enough. To Geraldine, it might have been a sign of respect to the priest or a half-genuflection in honour of Our Lord. It reminded Michael of a good constipation push.

‘It’s all part of the job,’ he said, and enjoyed her hesitation. Should she smile back or not?

While she dithered, he pressed her out of the doorway into the wide hall, and closed the door to keep the heat in.

‘Oh, father, you shouldn’t do that. And you carrying the Blessed Sacrament.’

‘The Good Lord helps those who help themselves.’ This he said in a tone of the utmost respect and, again, left her to guess whether to smile at the priestly levity, or genuflect at the mention of the Holy One.

He thought he should leave the winding-up at that. After all, there was more than one way to serve but *not near me, Lord.*

He got another duck of the shoulders. ‘I’m Geraldine, Granny Ingram’s granddaughter. I have devoted my life to making her last years as comfortable as possible.’

He thought that finding comfort in the Ingram house wouldn’t be too difficult. Everything was fresh and new, and the carpet thick underfoot.

‘That’s very commendable of you,’ he said. *Holy bloody Mary*. He took her hand; it was dry and grainy to the touch. ‘It’s a pleasure to meet you.’

She ducked again and added a simper for good measure.

He got something else. It grew as he followed her through what had once been a basic “Glens” house. Over the years it had been extended and renovated and extended again, with more thought given to comfort than economy.

What Michael got was the faintest whiff of a smell, tart with an edge of sugar-sweet, that made him frown in puzzlement. The puzzlement turned to a smile as Geraldine led him upstairs into an en suite bedroom. A bedroom more expensively decked out in beige and mauve than any farmer on hill grant or cattle subsidy could easily afford.

Geraldine said, ‘When you’ve finished administering to Granny, father, perhaps you would hear my confession?’

Geraldine’s confession had to be like all nuns’ confessions, a litany of failings that normal people wouldn’t even think of mentioning: “This morning I didn’t clean my teeth properly. I didn’t do a full genuflection when I passed the Holy Sacrament”.

*Jesus! Stoned to death with feathers.*

He felt ashamed of himself for complaining in the midst of comfort, but the only time he’d ever felt part of the active ministry of Christ was during the months he’d spent in Bogotá.

He found it impossible to talk, even to his partner, Jo, about the remains of unwanted and unloved children, picked up off the streets on a daily basis and buried in makeshift graves.

He’d worked with the Jesuits, climbing transformers, rubber gloved and terrified out of his mind in case he killed himself. He found that fear of the climb was worse than the actual moment of contact, when he used bulldog clips and trailing wires to connect the poorer districts of Caracas to the national grid, free of charge.

And even there he had failed, and been sent home.

He smiled over at Geraldine. ‘Of course,’ as if he couldn’t think of anything nicer than hearing her confession.

From the bed came an impatient, ‘Holy bloody Mary.’

The old lady lay there, definitely not well, but the eyes had a sparkle. Michael’s smile widened.

Geraldine rushed over to her and fussed things tidy. ‘It’s good of the father to come, and him just arrived in the parish.’

‘So you didn’t lose yourself, then?’

‘Granny!’

Michael walked over to the bed, conscious of those sharp old eyes on his limp, and took her hand. ‘I just followed the smell of your homebrew.’

Granny Ingram gripped him back with surprising strength. She used her left hand, the right stayed under the bedclothes. She scowled. ‘You’re like the rest of them, all talk.’ The old head shook. ‘I don’t know what the world is coming to when a man can’t hold his drink.’

Geraldine plumped at the pillows, full of righteous indignation. ‘You don’t know the father, he could be highly insulted.’

‘Oh, totally,’ said Michael.

‘He’s got a sense of humour, hasn’t he?’ growled Granny Ingram. ‘Not like that other old grouch.’ Her grip tightened. ‘Young man, I’ll enjoy telling you my sins.’

Michael settled himself on the edge of the bed, feeling his injured leg ease against the flock-down mattress.

‘It’ll be an honour.’

‘Now Granny, don’t go making them up to shock the father.’

They waited until Geraldine had fussed and genuflected her way out the door.

Granny Ingram smiled at Michael from the plumped-up pillows. ‘Father Michael Toner, and from the city? Tell me about yourself, young man. Right from the day you were kittled.’

They were still holding hands. Michael squeezed back. ‘No you tell me about yourself, that’s bound to be a lot more interesting.’

‘You’ve suffered,’ she said back.

He kept his smile fixed, thinking she was going to ask about his leg, but she slipped her good hand out of his and touched his face just above the ridge of the eyebrow. ‘That line speaks of great pain.’

He put his fingers to the same spot. The line was too fine to feel but he knew it was there. ‘I never knew that.’

He would have told her about the accident, but she was beginning to fade; her head lolling sideways. He took her hand in his and said briskly, ‘Now tell me what terrible things you’ve been up to.’

*John McAllister*

## Invisible Man

Today I caught  
one of my occasional glimpses of him,  
dressed in robes  
appropriate for the state he's in;  
he was hugging the side of buildings  
secreting his way through the streets  
like a silhouette.

In the past I have seen him  
throw a half-hearted glance at people  
but noticed he got nothing in return.  
Other times, like today  
I saw him pull a grimaced, twisted face  
quickly followed by a grin  
as if trying to provoke a reaction,  
anything.

But he never does,  
its as if he isn't there.

I wouldn't blame him for believing  
that something strange is afoot,  
some sort of social hocus pocus or economic voodoo  
causing him to fade from world view,  
leaving one less *awkwardness*  
to trouble me and you.

*Gerard Sheehy*

## **Oh Amby . . .**

my vocal chords have been ripped apart  
by unsuspecting nicotine,  
cancer hiding whispers of itself like an old lover-  
i have seen your vast collection of hourglasses  
each with a name carved in gold and a tombstone in silver,  
you're warm to touch but in chemo we shiver  
and sigh, forlorn,  
i have your name tattooed on my lungs,  
i have been loyal since i have been young  
and now you repay me by holding my tongue  
and closing my throat for fear i speak ill of your name...

there will be amber leaves upon my grave,  
to accompany i and all those whom the chemo couldn't save.

*Isolde Stapleton*

## **Dark Sister**

Grief like uranium dust blows  
And is caught in the eyelashes of my dark sister.  
The Mother of Sorrow watches me cry  
Cry for the lashes on my dark sister.

Ah pain, what use is profit?  
What gain is oil,  
Rich with the blood of my dark sister?

I drive my car  
And warm my walls  
Running on the blood of my dark sisters.

Does she not cry for the man she loves,  
Give birth to her children in pain and blood,  
Slave night and day in pursuit of good,  
Praying for their lives, like all her sisters?

What use is it to her that I see  
Her defeat, daily, and her shame?  
What use is it that we know our blame  
And reach out with love, her redundant pale sisters?

*Fiona Joyce*

## Shoe Boxes

Shoe boxes full of treasures and wonderful things  
Like go-gos and crayons, and a piece of old string.  
The plastic remains of a licked lollipop,  
And a miniature toy from a box of Cornpops.

A rubber, a topper, a chewed dolly's leg,  
A raggedy blanket she still takes to bed.  
A stone from Trabolgan, a shell from the sea,  
A mother's day card she coloured for me.

A bracelet, a pencil, a piece from a game,  
A tiny wee teddy that yet has no name,  
A wrapper from sweeties that were eaten so quick,  
I've warned her so often, "One day you'll be sick".

A lid from a bottle of her favourite drink,  
A straw from McDonalds – I shudder to think;  
That one of these days this little girl will grow up,  
And shoe boxes of treasures will soon be forgot.

*Dympna Kelly*

## **Five am in Perth, Australia**

We keep a clock at Perth time here  
and as I do my final tidy round  
I see it's five am there. Are you  
restless, roused by milk deliveries  
and heavy bin collecting trucks  
or by the swish of dead leaves  
dashed against your window?

My mistake, it's spring there now,  
dawn chorus perhaps a discord  
of bowerbird, bushlark, thornbill.  
Here our sycamore stands stripped,  
its rough leaves filthy litter.

At verge of sleep I am befuddled.  
Are those pert rooks on the roof  
or you sleep-walking in the attic?  
And you, I hope, confuse the  
clamour of your neighbours waking  
with my dressing and descent to put  
the kettle on, release your terrier.

*Michael Farry*

## **On Washing Dishes**

It's a chore I've never  
shied away from,  
rather,  
on the contrary,

I've embraced the task,  
especially after a long day  
when my thoughts are tangled,  
my mind a web of untidiness.

There is music here  
if you listen properly,  
an orchestra of sorts,  
each dish strikes its own chord,

and I get lost  
in the spume of bubbles,  
the continual process  
of dip, wash, dry and put away.

With every dish  
a knot unravels,  
thoughts slowly recede  
from the shores of my mind,

and at the end  
the day's events  
are washed away,  
sucked down the plug hole.

*Stephen Farren*

## **The Return**

The day poetry returned  
He entered a quiet ticket office  
Booked a seat on the train  
Steaming outside at the platform.

The day poetry returned  
He picked up a paperback Auden  
Reflected on the Liffey lapping  
300 yards from the book shop.

The day poetry returned  
London Underground was advertising  
From Russia with Love.  
Fellini's 8½ premiered in Oxford Street

The Beatles sang And I love her  
While Rimini waves flashed winter sunlight.

*Eamon Cooke*

## Another September

It was September and she was beautiful, crowned with yellow sundrenched hair, wispy like the hay we were saving. She was scarcely out of her teens? What was she? Sixteen. Sweet sixteen. Dettie. Her birthday only a few weeks ago, yes, I remember now because she had kept me a generous portion of her sponge cake. Dettie with the sky blue eyes lighting up the freckled galaxy of her face; I was in love with her eternal summer. The jokes she had to tell, bonding to me. She saw me in an avuncular sort of way, I, being the long standing neighbour like a member of the fatherless family helping out at the harvest every year with my chrome-gleaming tractor. Shone specially for her.

After the work, in their kitchen, awash with oceans of tea and replete with ham sandwiches, we gaze at their small sash window towards the sun, hinting of greater things. An Indian summer, her mother, Mrs Kelleher says, as flies buzz around in a frantic last gasp at this late season renewal. Their two dogs barking in a confused stereo. Mrs Kelleher mopping her brow with her floral apron. Dettie in her powder blue jeans, smiling towards me with a morsel of sandwich trapped in the song lark's gap of her shining teeth. Contained to table, but only half sitting, on the edge of her chair, willing something to happen so she can run into the sunsoaked world, free from the shadowed house of dark flagstones and parental proscriptions.

'Will I tell you another one, Michael?'

'Enough of that,' Mrs Kelleher says sternly. Michael doesn't want to hear...'

But I did. I loved it in fact, to hear those fruitsweet tones.

'Let me drive your tractor, Michael.'

Derring-do, my daring girl. How could I refuse her?

‘Michael has better things to be doing.’ Mrs Kelleher’s voice, crackly like the pale skin of her gnarled hand topping up my cup for the third unwanted time.

‘It’s no trouble.’

In the dry, cowpatted yard, the tractor, like a sunkissed animal, waiting. I offer to whoosh her up.

‘I can do it, Michael.’

A lithe tomboy, gleaming angel, scampering up a mudguard. I commence to point out the brake, the accelerator, the...

‘I know, Michael.’ The voice of youthful impatience.

‘Let me do it.’

The key, silver-glinting in her lightly tanned fingers. The engine splutters. The tractor lurches forward.

‘Easy What are you doing, Dettie? Press the brake.’

She is laughing excitedly.

‘I’m moving, Michael. See.’

‘The brake, Dettie.’

The tractor bounces and accelerates down the boren, toppling over, and for the first, the only time, I hear an unfamiliar sound, a shrill tone coming from Dettie. But that can’t be Dettie. Surely? It is the painful plea of an interloper, addressing me, ‘Michael, Michael.’

I run after the tractor shouting down the boren, the two dogs barking, human voices in my wake. Her body, crushed under. Dettie. Her voice now is the engine whimpering, coming to a standstill. My lips release a cry of incomprehension. ‘How could...?’ Tears. A mother’s wail.

Where has time gone? All those months, those seasons in between? Why have you not come back to haunt me, Dettie, to ask me where the brake is? Can’t you see, it is another September and

the sun is glinting on the haystacks, on a world of warmth and honey.

*James Lawless*

### **Writer's Block**

You can take a pen to the inkpot  
but you cannot make it drink.  
Words trapped in the brain's whorl  
go round and round,  
tumble drying to silence.

*Geraldine Mitchell*

## A Dry Spell

Writers block is like a lack of virility, it hits us all now and then. For months you are beavering away like it is going out of style and then one day you wake up and the feeling is gone. To recharge my batteries I usually go somewhere to get lost in the wilderness. Last Sunday it was looking grim so I headed for Slieve Gullion , on the way there I saw a sign for Kavanagh Country in Inniskeen and felt it might have been an omen so bye bye County Armagh . . . till another day.

I suppose I felt a little stimulated reading about the Christmas Childhood or how poor old Paddy was not appreciated in his day and had to publish his own “Kavanagh’s Weekly”. The Kavanagh Centre had lost its audio visual so I did not have to listen to Pompous Patrick waffling on about the ways of the world instead I read some poetry ,studied old maps and photographs and before I left I collected a local guide and bought a Tommy Sands CD.

The friendly lady on the desk recognised me and asked me how the writing was doing. I got lots of stimulation from that. Nowhere else in the world except in Trim on a Thursday twice a month am I acknowledged as a writer. “That’s it,” I thought “Keep going you will get to the end of the page yet”.

On my way out I remembered my first time in the centre when I met Gene Carroll, the actor who for many years had a one man Kavanagh show for visitors to Inniskeen. I was on my own and he was gracious enough to bring me up to the grave and tell me about the Kavanagh he knew. We also visited the grave of Gene’s wife Kathleen; she had died the winter before. Next time I called, Gene was with Kathleen, I listened to poetry and a few

countrymen's yarns as Colum Sands played the concertina on a spring morning at their grave side

I went walking by the banks of the Fane and took lots of photos as I tried to walk the Monaghan way before the rain. I spent half an hour sheltering under the railway bridge at the station from where they once ran day trips to Enniskillen and Bundoran or shopping specials to Carrickmacross and Dundalk. The boom boom, boom, boom, boom from the lounge in the station courtyard made me feel uneasy and a little uncomfortable. It was definitely out of touch with the stony grey soil of Monaghan. It was like Billy Brennan's Barn gone techno. Perhaps they should rename the bar "Tarry Flynn's Boom Boom Room".

The rain was still falling and I no longer fancied a trip up Cassidy's Hanging Hill. A Great Hunger came over me, I needed inspiration so I headed across the hills for a nearby hostelry approx three miles from the Harp Brewery in Dundalk which sadly only sold draught Carlsberg. Still the smile from the older woman with the unlined face who welcomed me was worth the lack of the Danish Brew. The young waitress seemed uneasy as I took out a note book and began to note. The restaurant served a brown bread to die for and was full of oversized Roast Beef eaters out for the Sunday Meat Tea with their silent grey haired parents who ood and ahhed when the waitress presented a tray of veg or a dessert menu.

In the absence of a salad on the menu I had scampi and a further surly waitress who did not want to be there asked if there was anything else. I only wanted her to smile but I suffered a coffee and it was time to go.

With Tommy Sands in my CD player telling me he is "Going back to the bicycle," I headed for the seaside at Blackrock which

on a bank holiday Monday is an amazing place and now also reeked of garlic .This was hardly noticed by the hordes in their cars eating 99's or maybe it was a special Blackrock recipe for garlic ice cream 99's. I still had the notebook and the pencil and as I walked and made notes people kept a suspicious eye on my search for inspiration.

I went to Danny Hughes', the most famous shop in Blackrock where a sign says "this traditional seaside shop has been trading since 1949". Danny sells Ice Creams, Buckets and Spades, Chips, Candy Floss, Cigarettes and Musical Instruments. I bought a set of drums there 10 years ago. Danny is probably also the local undertaker which explains why he was closed on a Bank Holiday Monday or maybe he was searching for a lucky back cat.

All over town in every shop window someone was looking for Ying Yang and it was obviously the story of the day, the cat missing now for a week and its owner fretting. I wasn't fretting, I was annoyed that this was the Big Story in Blackrock. Now it was becoming "A bad day in Blackrock" and as there was no sign of Spencer Tracy there was nothing to write about in this sleepy town so I went home to get some inspiration.

*Paul Egan*

## **The Middle of the Road Cow**

At seventy  
she is as stubborn  
as the pie-eyed heifer  
stood  
in the middle of the road  
the distance between us  
gauged at a half yard  
of grass and stone.

In her hay day  
she was as strong  
as she now is wide  
muscled calves thrust  
into black rubber wellies  
pink soles baked  
in a crust  
of manure and mud.

Now when she moves  
it is with the certainty  
that I follow behind  
head lowered  
back to the wind  
guiding my path  
with the sway  
of white hair.

*Rachael Mooney*

## **Fossils**

the pebbledash was washed that fine day  
drowned in white as Summer flies' toss  
turned thoughts to a few bob in the bog.

He cut  
I caught and wheeled and tossed  
and with turf near ripe  
converted to footings, heaps and shillings  
all to the backdrop of baked tea in the billycan,  
a sup of milk, a bit of bread  
and my tremendous fear of frogs.

Evening put bikes by the bank,  
dusk signalled the setting of nightlines;  
dark came slow to our Summer rituals.

*Evan Costigan*

## A Crying Shame

When I ran into Duignan at the mart he was in his usual form, warm but guarded. He was the type of man who wouldn't be above giving a nod to other farmers not to bid against him if he were purchasing your cattle. To my query about how much he had got for his bullocks he grinned and said, "Enough!" I didn't press him and the conversation turned to shooting.

"Has that bitch of yours pupped yet?" he enquired.

Now I had a beautiful Irish setter, Ruby, and she had recently dropped six healthy pups, one of which I had named Freddy after a former school pal who was a bit of a devil.

"She has," I said. "If you call to the house some evening I'll let you have one. They're one hundred per cent purebred."

"Ah, now, I wasn't trying to cadge a pup." He managed to hide his satisfaction. "I'll pay you the going rate."

"You won't," I told him. "Haven't we had many a good day's shooting together? I know that if I give you a pup you'll treat it well and that's all that matters. Just give me a call beforehand and let me know when to expect you."

On hearing that, nothing would satisfy him except that he'd treat me to dinner in the Bridge Hotel. Although anxious to get home to feed Ruby, I consented and two hours later drove off in the Land Rover with a stomach full of roast beef and – though I'm loath to confess it – a little too much Jameson. Nevertheless, I made the journey home safely. My wife, Nora, was in Waterford looking after her mother, who was recovering from an operation, so I was glad I didn't have to prepare an evening meal.

When I opened the stable door where Ruby was kennelled she greeted me ecstatically, while Freddy waddled over to stumble across my boots. "If you've a nose half as good as your mother's," I said, petting him, "you and me will have great sport when you've grown up."

In the following weeks I was kept busy milking the cows, tending the cattle and coping with the housework. One evening after returning from posting her favourite slippers to Nora, I went to check on Ruby. To my consternation there were only five pups in the stable and the missing one was Freddy. I searched the place thoroughly, then the other outhouses and even checked the back garden. Not a trace of the pup! Did somebody steal him? With his pedigree, that pup was worth at the very least three hundred euro. After a while I recalled my offer to Duignan. Had he dropped by while I was out? If he had, why hadn't the so-and-so left a note?

When we next met at the mart, Duignan made no mention of a pup so I knew he had helped himself in my absence. "All right, you cute fox," I told myself, "just you wait."

My chance to get even came when I learned from a neighbour that Duignan had acquired the next season's shooting rights to Johnson's demesne, about fifty miles away, in the midlands. If I knew Duignan it had been purchased at a knockdown price. About a week before the pheasant season opened I arranged with my nephew to look after the farm, then told my two regular shooting companions, Joe and Michael, that we'd be heading for Johnson's the coming Wednesday. They were to bring their spaniels and I'd bring Ruby. On their asking if the demesne was preserved, I replied "Don't worry about that. Everything's taken care of."

Well, on a clear, brisk November First, the three of us arrived at Johnson's not long after sunrise. I had just parked the Land Rover inside the imposing entrance and the closing the iron gates when an officious fellow, who I took to be the steward, emerged from the gatehouse and asked just where in Hell did I think I was going. Didn't I know this was a private demesne?

"My friends and I are here to do a spot of shooting," I explained. "I'm Sean Duignan."

"Oh, Mister Duignan! Of course – I should have known." The fellow almost tugged his forelock. "Mr Johnson said you have

permission to shoot as many pheasants as you please, but no wild duck. If you drive down to the lake you can leave the Land Rover at the boathouse. There should be pheasants in the woodland on the far side of the lake.”

Well, we had an outstanding morning’s sport. Ruby and the spaniels worked beautifully together, the spaniels able to penetrate briar clumps, while Ruby excelled on more open ground. In no time I had downed four cocks and Joe and Michael between them another five.

“It’s time to be heading home,” I told them when we heard the angelus bell ringing from the village church.

“Why are we going now?” Joe protested. “We’re just getting into our stride.”

“We want to leave a few for the next fellows,” I explained, not mentioning that I was anxious to skedaddle before Duignan arrived.

When we reached the gatehouse, the steward obligingly opened the gates for me. Acting the squire, I handed him a twenty-euro tip.

“You’re always welcome, Mr Duignan!” he called out as I drove off.

That was the best day’s shooting I had in ages. The next time I met Duignan at the mart I could see he was itching to lambaste me but didn’t want to give me the satisfaction of admitting I had stolen a march on him.

“How’s the shooting going?” I asked.

“Not bad,” he declared, wearing his poker player’s face. “Did you have any luck yourself?”

“Ah, you know how it is,” I said. The damn poachers are clearing out the few birds that are around. It’s a crying shame.”

*Patrick Devaney*

## **The Whining Beat**

A lover is a mind,  
One's mind cannot let go of,  
    Nature is a rhythm,  
Sounding in the tide,  
Sounding in a gentle sleep.  
    It will never be forgotten,  
It beats on and off for you  
To remember of the mind you  
left behind.

*Jack Rogers*

## **The Smallest Part**

Let us live a life that is wild and free.  
Let us pluck trees from their roots  
Like giants in a garden.  
Let us look down to the earth  
Like eagles skyward  
And we will not fall  
And we will not fail  
When fear is banished from our hearts.

Let me be brave and let me love you,  
Let me love myself.  
Let me be the tiger that roams  
And do not tame me.  
Do not cage me and I will keep society too.

Leave me to hold blue sky  
In the branches of the tree,  
To have my seasons but do not hold me too much.  
Let me find my own summer where the rose  
Sleep in the garden.  
Let me dream there. Let me have my dreams.  
Let me love  
And know the worth of a promise kept.

On a bird's wing let me  
Write the secrets of my heart in the sky.  
Let me hold the swallow's tail.  
Leave me my heart and the sunlight  
And do not cover me. I know the shade.  
Let us live a life that is larger.  
Let us be free and fear will be  
The least part of us.

*Orla Fay*

## **Skeleton**

There's a startling familiarity  
About that stance  
The hunched clavicle  
The tibia, the grin  
The fibula  
Finely tuned as a fiddle string

And I've seen that slouch before  
Felt those arms around me  
The eyes transfix me to the floor  
Could you  
Be asking me to dance

And who's for the Seige of Ennis?  
You could be saying, or  
Let's tango to the strains  
Of those long forgotten airs  
Those resurrected melodies  
That linger in the half light  
Of a thousand scrambled memories  
Let's dance.

*Tommy Murray*

## **Virgin**

You were,  
A baby's breath virgin.  
The Romanian rose bought on a Temple Bar corner at four in the  
morning,  
had wilted alone against your mirror with no friends to lean upon.  
No white budded fawning.

So when your new paramour,  
Passed your mother in the hall with a red bouquet of white bedded  
roses,  
she opened the door in a knowing way and said "He's a good one"  
And you wrote Love, Love, Love, all over your schoolbooks.

*Sarah Betts*

## **The Love of his Life**

The bright yellow of her mini-skirt first caught his eye as he sat in the garden enjoying the beautiful fresh morning; the same warm sun which caught the silver in his hair, drawing particular attention to the lovely long brown legs which seemed to reach forever from her shapely ankles. His mind flashed back to those carefree days of his youth, when such a sight was commonplace, but nonetheless enjoyable – that was one thing could be said of him - he had never lost his eye for a pretty girl, particularly one with long brown legs!

Tom's eyes twinkled with some of their old lustre as he remembered his Sarah the first time he saw her – she had been hurrying down Grafton Street, her books tucked under her arm, ginger hair and green eyes flashing, obviously late (or almost) for her next lecture. Afterwards he discovered she was studying law and even then the thought had crossed his mind that a legal training would be such a help to him in his business and what a great partnership they would have – to think so early on in their friendship he had been contemplating their future together – the nerve of him really when he thought about it now, but from the moment they first met he had always felt that wonderful spark between them which never seemed to fail, even now.

Shortly after they were married Tom's father had died and he was left to run the business alone; it had been a wonderful challenge and he had risen to the role in a way he would never have thought possible; all the years when the children were growing up he worked so hard but still managed to have a holiday with the family every year and what marvellous fun they had. Even though Tom was firm in his dealing with his children on a day to day basis and expected so much of them, holidays were

different and he could still remember racing them on the sands after the rounders ball or thrashing about in the sea, even if it was freezing cold as it always seemed to be on the west coast of Ireland in Kilkee where they had a holiday home.

Just recently he and Sarah had spent a few days in their favourite old haunt on the west coast; autumn was in the air but what a splendid reunion they both had with old times. As they strolled along the promenade the years seemed to fall away and all the thrill of being in each other's company flowed back – they seemed to be dancing along at each other's side again laughing at the wonder of it all. What a marvellous life they had had together.

Tom seemed to doze off in his chair, not noticing as his favourite book slipped to the ground but drifting quietly along towards the beckoning horizon, a wonderful peacefulness spreading through him and as he glanced back to say farewell to his beloved Sarah he smiled knowing that she would soon follow after him for they could never live without each other, not for long anyway.

*Hilda Potterton*

## Untitled

Perhaps it is too soon to say -  
To tell - that story -  
The pain - or memories of it -  
Still blows in with  
Blustery freshness,  
Stinging cheeks, and eyes (and hearts);  
It - pain - is still unorganised  
Unclassified and messy  
Without neat mind-boxes.  
Someday - perhaps - it will be known  
As an old friend  
A tale told and retold -  
Its once sharp reality  
Fading (fast as dreams on waking)  
Narrative fantasizes  
With new, cleaner memories made  
In telling.  
But now - the wound - it glistens  
Bloody and unclotted -  
Story strands of skin will form  
Eventually - the healing.

*Maria Flood*

## **Like Eve, I was Tempted**

Eve, Man's plight,  
You chose my path,  
Forsaking Eden  
Barefoot.  
Grass to stone,  
Due to blood,  
Fallen from grace  
Into womanhood

Adam, Eve's faithful,  
Stayed her side,  
Loved her,  
Lifted her,  
Shamed she cried.  
Born of her  
Two with such shame,  
Cain slew Abel,  
Eve is to blame.

Had she pined away  
From temptations tree,  
I would walk Eden,  
Woman would be free.  
Yet I have no Adam  
To soothe my pain,  
Alone I live lesser  
Always, Eve is to blame.

*Sarah Gibbons*

## **Patterns**

*(Bastille Day 2007)*

We parted  
Though you were meant to be mine.  
Waves of disappointment filled  
L'Avenue de l'Opéra  
With echoes of  
“La foule”.  
Footsteps continued  
For miles ahead  
Absorbing  
Shades of pink.  
Footsteps continued.  
Fashion Designer transformed  
Poet  
Capturing patterns from  
*Dallas* and *Dynasty*.  
Footsteps ceased  
Before it was too late  
For France and Ireland  
To merge.

*Sinéad Mac Devitt*

## **A Husband's Tale**

Brilliant in fluorescent strata,  
Glimmer-lit: you strafe the lines of unit-  
Shelving in gung-ho, list-armed readiness;

Pen at hand for ticked elimination,  
item by item.

You pause at canisters, at jars – troops  
Of red, rust and ochre – helmeted in

Their squat battalions; barrel-chested and  
Menacing under cryptic-shielded  
Labels, to choose a cherished bolognaise.

On high ground, barrack a sauce opinion  
From this unlettered, outflanked foot-shopper  
And so advised, decry; with smirks decline.

As commodities swarm bargain upon  
Tumbling bargain in the patrolling basket  
Your merlin-eyes, quick and skittering in

Their value-hunting temper, cool and so  
With final tick, relief.

Return to base,  
To check-out and a smiling girl;

Spine-ached, trolley-footed, shelf-shocked,  
Seek the safe-house and succour  
Of pips, a blue flicker.

*Brendan Carey Kinane*

## **When I grow up**

When I grow up  
I'm gonna be a policeman.  
When I grow up,  
I'm gonna be a footballer.  
When I grow up,  
I'm gonna be a film star.  
When I grow up,  
I'm gonna be rich and famous,  
And leave here.

When I grow up,  
I'm gonna get away from;  
The filth  
The slums  
The stink  
The drugs  
The knives  
The guns  
The street.

When I grow up

If I grow up

*Alan McKean*

## Unspoken Truth

If I told you  
that water no longer  
runs over the bridge,  
that the sun doesn't  
set fire to everything;  
if I showed you  
how roses bloom in the rain,  
how impossible is possible  
just years down the road,  
if I told you  
that rivers run swift  
and that you can ride them;  
if I told you  
that midnight's dew  
is sweeter than dawn's,  
I'd believe me.  
Not once,  
have I uttered  
an unspoken truth.

*Stephanie Hiteshew*

## **The Barking Dog**

It's four o'clock in the morning  
and the dog starts barking downstairs.  
No one else is awake except me,  
I turn over to you but you're fast asleep  
oblivious to the state of the world.

At five o'clock I eventually go downstairs  
let the dog out to do her business,  
wait for her to finish  
and then go back to bed.  
Fifteen minutes later she starts barking again.

This time I reach for the heavy artillery  
I nudge you awake and let you deal with her.

*Dominic Taylor*

## Lost and Found

“It must have been ghastly for you”  
They said when I told them of the night  
I found a seven year old child’s  
Hand under the pillow in my bed.

Perfectly formed, even to the smooth nails  
I stroked it gently, held it loosely  
And then after what seemed like an hour  
But, I later found out, was really  
More like seven years, I let it go.

Back it went to its parent arm  
Leaving me holding a paper tissue  
And a crumpled sheet full of dreams.

*Sean Flood*

## **A New Year Sky**

Across the unwritten sky  
pale and clean as a fresh page  
one swan appears  
neck stretched in flight.

This white sculpted shape  
of grace must have flown  
from the hand  
of some Italian stuccoist.

In wintry Drumsna  
gale-bent Shannon grasses underfoot,  
we look skyward, ask each other  
where the swan is headed,

- perhaps to join her flock  
at some Connemara lake  
or Hy Brasil or even Tír na nÓg  
a queenly odyssey to another world.

Our swan has disappeared now,  
the sky bears no trace of silverchain  
but her image sharply bones  
into your soul and mine.

*Eithne Cavanagh*

## **The Last Dragon**

In the twilight, 'fore the dawn,  
On a misty Winter's morn.  
The winged warlord reared her head  
And rose from out her rocky bed.

Then gazing at the speckled sky,  
She sensed a change, a turn of tides.  
Once mystery laden, magic plains  
Lay empty, stricken. Desolate.

A sadness stung her ancient heart,  
She knew than what had come to pass.  
A truth that hurt her to the core:  
The age of dragons was no more.

Decidedly, she left her lair,  
And braved the freezing morning air.  
A forgotten god in a world that screams,  
Of facts and laws. And broken dreams.

She poised a while, then flexed her tail,  
All bony plates and armoured scales.  
Outspread then, she flung her wings,  
Beating slowly, rhythmically.

With a mighty lurch she soared up high,  
Into the fragile morning sky.  
And declared then, with a giant's roar,  
That all that was would be no more.

While shadow still clung all around  
She took to flying, westward bound.  
And so it was before the light  
She left our land for Evernight.

The Faerie beings that ‘round her played  
Dissolved upon the break of day.  
All Magic lost for evermore,  
To this soulless, changeling world.

*Rory O’Sullivan*

### **A Stonewall at Monasterboice**

Up on a little chestnut hunter, Jack  
    he flies a low stonewall, as we sail over –  
        the ground falls away to a sharp drop.  
            Waiting for the impact –

for the uprising ground  
    his nose tips the grass as he pecks on landing –  
        recovers smoothly  
            to canter down the steep green hill.  
            “Brilliant, Jack!”

*Inès Dillon*

## Flash of Colour

You were a flash of dazzling colour,  
In my youthful days of black and white,  
A dummy, a shimmy, a small step-over,  
A giant leap to fields of fancy and flight,  
Banana shots round barrels and shivering wheat sheaves,  
Farmyard stadium of cows and dog watching me achieve  
Years of pleasure, slow ripening to reason.

The flashes of colour still sparkle 'n thrill,  
Rushing past twisted blood to heady feats.  
But ands on heavy hips, the message was chill,  
“The Devil take you and your two left feet”.  
I began to bury the dreams, forget the magic touch,  
‘Till in the Belfast greyness at the far end of the pitch,  
They buried you in a Roselawn - forever in radiant bloom.

*Dan Daly*

### Notes on Contributors

**Sarah Betts** is twenty three years old and works as a Montessori teacher. She is passionate about writing, reading and music.

**Sandra Bunting**, originally from Canada, has lived in the west of Ireland for many years. Her poetry collection *Identified in Trees* was published in 2006 by Marram Press. She is a member of the Galway Writers' Workshop, Engage Art Studios and an associate member of Log Printmakers.

**Andrew Caldicott** is a member of the Westgate Writers in Wexford. His poetry has appeared previously in *Trinity Poetry Broadsheet*, *Precursor*, and *Crannog*. He read at the 2007 Wexford Opera Fringe Festival.

**Brendan Carey Kinane** is a Company Director and lives with his family in Athboy in Co. Meath. In 2007 he was long-listed for the Fish International Poetry Prize and in the same year his poem "*Lough*" was the winning entry in The Boyle Arts Festival Poetry Competition. Another of Brendan's poems "*Studio*" was highly commended in the same competition. He is a member of The Boyne Writers Group.

**Eithne Cavanagh** has had her poems widely published in Ireland and abroad. She won first prize in Boyle in 1997, and the George Moore Gold Medal 2001, 2nd prize Francis Ledwidge Competition 2005. Her first collection *Bone and Petals* was published by Swan Press 2001. She teaches Creative Writing in Dublin and is a long term member of Rathmines Writers.

**Susan Connolly's** first collection of poetry "*For the Stranger*" was published by the Dedalus Press in 1993. In 2001 she won the Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry. She lives in Drogheda, Co. Louth.

**Eamon Cooke** has had poetry published in magazines throughout Ireland. His first collection "*Berry Time*" was published by Dedalus Press in 2002. Recently retired from Meath County Council, he now lives in Kells.

**Evan Costigan** writes poetry and short stories with a strong travel component. His poetry has most recently appeared in *Words on the Web* (WOW) online magazine (April 2007).

**Dan Daly**, a founder member of Boyne Writers Group, was born in Kerry. A teacher, he has been principal in Robinstown, Co. Meath since 1979. He has been writing as a hobby for many years and has had poems and articles published in *Meath Chronicle*, *INTOUCH Magazine* and *Sunday Independent*. He also paints for pleasure.

**Patrick Devaney** is a Roscommon-born teacher, poet and writer. His historical novel "*Through the Gates of Ivory*" was published by Lilliput Press in 2003.

**Inès Dillon** was brought up in Termonfeckin. She lives in Naas where she really began writing on her return to Ireland in 2001. She has given a reading of her poems at The Gerard Manley Hopkins International Summer School. She writes '*Art Matters*' a weekly column for the *Leinster Leader*.

**Paul Egan** is a founder member of Boyne Writers Group

**Stephen Farren** is from Derry, but is currently living and working in Barcelona. He has had poetry published in *Crannog*, *DEFAULT*, *The Black Mountain Review*, and online on the Irish haiku Society website ([www.freewebs.com/irishhaiku/](http://www.freewebs.com/irishhaiku/))

**Michael Farry** has had poems published in *Crannog*, *Revival* and *Carillon* magazines and poems of his have been short listed for the Sligo Scriobh Poetry Competition 2006, long listed for the Fish 2007 International Poetry Competition and Highly Commended for the Boyle Poetry 2007 competition.

**Orla Fay**, Dunderry, Co. Meath has a degree in English and History and a diploma in Montessori education. In the past she won the Meath Chronicle/Bookwise Short Story Prize with "*The Magician*" and the Drogheda Creative Writers Adult Poetry Prize with "*Death of Love in Autumn*". She is passionate about writing.

**Maria Flood** is a 21 year old student of English and French in Trinity College. She has been writing and reading poetry for many years, for love of writing and as a means of escape. Her favourite poets are William Blake, Emily Dickinson and the Romantic poets. Of writing she says, "Poetry for me is a means of explaining and expressing the inexpressible and the inexplicable in life, and dealing with the pain that these situations can sometimes produce."

**Sean Flood** is a self-employed businessman in his sixties who has been writing poetry all his life. He loves Shakespeare, Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh and Paul Durcan and has been involved in the local poetry scene in Kells for many years.

**Sarah Gibbons** is a native of Trim.

**Fiona Joyce** lives in an old farmhouse in Co. Meath with her partner and three children. As well as writing poetry she is a sometimes painter having been educated in art once upon a time. She has not published poetry before.

**Catherine Hastings** is a founder member of Boyne Writers Group

**Stephanie Hiteshow** from the USA has published two chapbooks in 2006 and 2007 and has a spoken work CD produced in 2005. She believes in supporting the small press scene as well as the larger ones.

**Dympna Kelly** is a native of Trim, is married to Michael and is mother to three teenage daughters. This is the first time she has had a poem published, and she dedicates it to her youngest daughter Ruth.

**James Lawless** lives in Co. Kildare and has had award-winning poems and short stories published and broadcast in Ireland and the UK. His most recent short story, '*Jolt*' was selected for the anthology '*New Short Stories I*' published simultaneously in the US and UK. His first novel, '*Peeling Oranges*' was published by Killynon House Books, Mullingar in 2007.

**John McAllister** is the Facilitator for the Lib / Lab Creative Writing workshops organised by the Meath and Cavan Arts Committees. He has an M.Phil in Creative Writing from Trinity College, Dublin. His novel, '*Line of Flight*' (Bluechrome) was published in 2006.

**Sinéad Mac Devitt** was born in Navan, Co. Meath. She has a diploma in Speech & Drama and Montessori teaching. Her work has appeared in '*Extended Wings*', '*Heart of Kerry*' and '*Boyne Berries I*'.

**Alan McKean** has been writing for about 5 years, mainly writing about what he sees around him, with some inspiration from his children and grandchildren. Having worked for a Premier League football club, he also writes pieces on the beautiful game. He has had moderate publishing success in magazines and e-zines. He is happy with what he writes.

**Michael Massey** is a Kilkenny poet. He has had two collections published: '*The Hilltop Teahouse*' and '*Nothing to Fear*'.

**Geraldine Mitchell** worked as a teacher and journalist in Algeria, France and Spain before returning to Ireland. She has written fiction and biography but since settling in Mayo mostly writes poetry.

**Rachael Mooney** is from Co Donegal and currently resides in Dublin. She completed her MA in Poetry at Lancaster University in 2004 and was awarded a distinction. Prior to this she obtained a 2:1 in her BA Degree in English and French at NUI, Galway.

**Louis Moran** is a retired member of An Garda Síochána. Was a publican for seven years and is now a driving instructor.

**Frank Murphy**, has been a member of the Meath Writers' Circle since 2001. He has published one book of poems '*The Marginal Line*'. His work has been highly commended and short listed on a number of occasions, most recently in the Oliver Goldsmith competition.

**Tommy Murray** from Trim has had many books of poetry and prose published and has won several national awards for literature. His latest poetry volume is '*Counting Stained Glass Windows*' and his '*Voices of Meath*' was published earlier this year.

**Rory O' Sullivan** is 24 and lives in Rathmolyon, Co. Meath. He has always enjoyed poetry and started to write his own poetry in 2003.