



IN FROM THE EDGE

Celebrating marginalised voices
in the Irish and Ulster-Scots literary traditions



ISLAND VOICES 2023

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“Thus it has been, and thus it shall be;
so long as the world shall last,
circumstance shall not conquer a
strong and beautiful spirit”
(D. Radford 1906)



ISLAND VOICES 2023

Derry City and Strabane District Council presents Island Voices 2023 - a series of lunchtime lectures exploring the life and legacy of marginalised literary figures from the Irish and Ulster-Scots traditions in the North West.

In from the Edge will reflect on the life and work of three seminal Donegal writers: - Sarah Leech,

Seosamh Mac Grianna and Frances Browne – each of whom, despite having faced adversity and, at times, exclusion in their lives have, in more recent times, been recognised for the unique contribution they have made to the literary worlds of English, Irish and Ulster-Scots.



Sarah Leech: The Outsider from the Fort of the Strangers (Dún na nGall)

With Dr. Pauline Holland

Thursday 28 September 2023, 1pm

Tower Museum, Derry

Sarah Leech was a 19th century Donegal poet who battled poverty, illness and discrimination to become the only known published Irish female weaver poet, and one of the most prominent of the Ulster-Scots tradition. Marginalised from the literary publishing world by gender and rural isolation, and isolated from her own society by religion and poverty, Leech's voice soars across the centuries as she flashes between English and Ulster-Scots to create her own unique verse. Her depictions of 19th century Irish rural society are like opening a portal into history.

About the speaker:

Dr Pauline Holland is the author of *Treasure Each Voice*, a 400-page anthology of Irish, English and Ulster-Scots prose, poetry and song spanning the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. It is the first work of its kind to provide a comprehensive anthology of the literature of the unique pluralist society of Ballybofey/Stranorlar and its hinterland. She was awarded her PhD, which featured ground-breaking research establishing Cavan poet Charlotte Brooke as the foundress of Anglo-Irish literature, from the University of Ulster; it has since been published by the British Library. She co-edited *Sarah Leech: The Ulster-Scots Poet of Raphoe, Co. Donegal*. Her play, *Strangers to Our Own* is based on the life of Sarah Leech and features some of her original work.

Admission Free / Lunch Provided from 12:30pm



Seosamh Mac Grianna: A Lonely Writer with Loyal Readers

With Pól Ó Muirí

Thursday 26 October 2023, 1pm

Tower Museum, Derry

Seosamh Mac Grianna (1900-1990) was one of the leading writers of Irish in the 20th century, though his work remained relatively unknown until recent times. Hailing from Ranafast in the Donegal Gaeltacht, Mac Grianna, who viewed himself as an outsider, soon made a name for himself as a new and innovative voice in Irish literature. His autobiographical novel *Mo Bhealach Féin* (1940) charts his personal reaction to post-revolution Ireland and is considered to contain some of the writer's best work. His writing life was, however, relatively short-lived, and the political and cultural tides of the time, along with personal tragedy, brought their own challenges.

About the speaker:

Pól Ó Muirí was born in Belfast in 1965. He was educated at St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School in the city and at Queen's University, Belfast, where he gained degrees in Celtic Studies and Scholastic Philosophy. His first collection of poetry was published in 1991 and he has written several more since, as well as collections of short stories, radio plays, and books for adult learners of Irish. In 1991, he was given the Sam Hanna Bell Fellowship in Literature from the Cultural Traditions Group, and in 1999 his biography of Seosamh Mac Grianna *'A Flight from Shadow: The Life and Works of Seosamh Mac Grianna* was published.

Admission Free / Lunch Provided from 12:30pm





The Life and Work of Frances Browne: The Blind Poetess of Ulster

With Raymond Blair

Thursday 23 November 2023, 1pm

Tower Museum, Derry

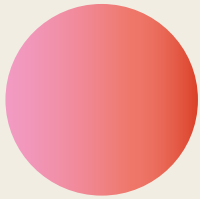
Frances Browne (1816-1879) a native of Stranorlar, County Donegal, despite being struck blind by smallpox at a very young age, managed to carve out a literary career for herself that took her to both Edinburgh and London and led her to be known in her own lifetime as the 'blind poetess of Ulster'. In addition to poetry, she also composed many short stories and essays and is best remembered for her frequently reprinted book of fantasy stories for children titled, 'Granny's Wonderful Chair and its Tales of Fairy Times'.

About the speaker:

Raymond Blair was born in Cavan Upper, Killygordon, in 1960, and received his primary education in the nearby Cooladawson National School. He developed a keen interest in history from an early age and his secondary education was obtained at the Royal and Prior Comprehensive School in Raphoe. He went on to study History at Trinity College Dublin which deepened his fascination with Irish history and, in particular, the interaction between landlords and tenants in 19th century Ireland. He subsequently went on to study Theology at the Reformed Theological College in Belfast and served as Pastor in Galway for over 20 years. Raymond is the author of 'The Best of Frances Browne: Poems, Stories and Essays by the Blind Genius of Stranorlar'.

Admission Free / Lunch Provided from 12:30pm





BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL

Please book your place by contacting the Tower Museum (028) 7137 2411 or email tower@derrystrabane.com

ADMISSION FREE.

Lunch provided from 12:30pm before each talk.

Please be aware that this programme is subject to change.

Regular updates available at:

www.derrystrabane.com/islandvoices

Further information on Irish and Ulster-Scots available from:

www.derrystrabane.com/gaeilge

www.derrystrabane.com/ulster-scots

This information is available upon request in a number of formats including large print, Braille, PDF, audio formats (CD, MP3, DAISY) and minority languages.

For further information on alternative formats please contact T: 028 71 253253 or equality@derrystrabane.com



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