

Tom French's books are published by The Gallery Press. His awards include the Dermot Healy Prize 2015 and the Forward Prize for Best First Collection 2002. In 2016 he received the O'Shaughnessy Award. In 2017 he edited *A Bittern Cry*, published by Meath County Council, Poetry Ireland /Éigse Éireann and The Francis Ledwidge Museum.

Jim Haughey teaches English at Anderson University in Anderson, South Carolina. He is the author of *The First World War in Irish Poetry* (2002) and has published essays on Francis Ledwidge, James Joyce, William Trevor, Sebastian Barry, Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley and Christina Reid.

Frank Ledwidge is a barrister and lecturer at Portsmouth University. He is a former Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy Reserve and has served in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. He is the author of *Losing Small Wars, Investment in Blood, Punching Below Our Weight and Rebel Law*. He is grand-nephew of poet Francis Ledwidge.

Terry Phillips is an honorary research fellow at Liverpool Hope University, where she was formally Dean of Arts and Humanities. She is the author of *Irish Literature and the First World War* and has published articles on Liam O'Flaherty, Francis Ledwidge, Thomas Kettle, George Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, and Sebastian Barry.

Nerys Williams lectures in American Literature at UCD. She has published widely on contemporary American and Anglophone poetries. Her first volume *Sound Archive* won the Shine/Strong Award in 2012 and her second *Cabaret* is to be published by New Dublin Press this year. Nerys was awarded a literary residency in Brussels in May as part of the Welsh Government's *Poetry of Loss* programme, which commemorated the centenary of poet Hedd Wyn.

Eiléan Ni Chuilleanáin is an Emeritus Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and currently Ireland Professor of Poetry (2016-19). She has published and edited academic articles and books on the literature of the English Renaissance, on translation, and on Irish writing in both Irish and English. With her husband Macdara Woods, she is, since 1975, a founder and co-editor of the Irish poetry journal *Cyphers*. She has published eight collections of poetry over 45 years, and her *Selected Poems* appeared in 2008. *The Boys of Bluehill* was published in 2015 by Gallery Press and Wake Forest University Press.

Philip Orr is based in Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim. He is a community project worker, specialising in oral history and the role of drama. He has written about the experience of Irish infantrymen in the Great War and his book, *Field of Bones - an Irish Division at Gallipoli*, published by Lilliput Press, offered insights into the wartime experience of Francis Ledwidge. He is also the chair of Media-tion Northern Ireland. He is a contributor to the recently published *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*.

Peter Fallon grew up on a farm near Kells. His recent books include *Strong, My Love* (2014) and *Deeds and Their Days* (after Hesiod, October 2017). He has been founder, editor and publisher of The Gallery Press since 1970 and he recently edited the *Collected Plays of Brian Friel*. A member of Aosdána and Honorary Member of the RHA, he lives in Loughcrew in County Meath where he farmed for many years.

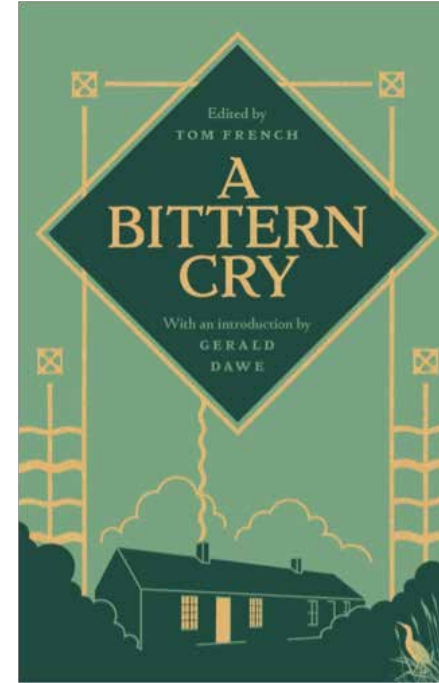
Gerard Smyth has published nine collections of poetry including *The Yellow River*, with artwork by Seán McSweeney (Solstice Arts Centre, Navan, 2017), *A Song of Elsewhere* (Dedalus Press, 2015), and *The Fullness of Time: New and Selected Poems* (Dedalus Press, 2010). He is a member of Aosdána and Poetry Editor of *The Irish Times*.

A BITTERN CRY

A testament to Francis Ledwidge, the man and poet. Edited by Tom French with an introduction by Gerald Dawe, *A Bittern Cry* includes essays and poetic contributions from Richard Ball, Eavan Boland, Gerald Dawe, Padraic Colum, Seán Dunne, Lord Dunsany, Peter Fallon, Tom French, Con Houlihan, Michael Longley, John McAuliffe, Thomas MacDonagh, Cathal Búí Mac Giolla Gunna, Gerard Smyth, Jessica Traynor, Brian Turner, Katharine Tynan, David Wheatley and Gareth Yore.

Published by Meath County Council, Poetry Ireland /Éigse Éireann and The Francis Ledwidge Museum.

Published to commemorate the centenary of the poet's death on 31 July 2017.



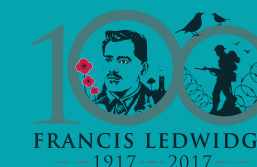
LEDWIDGE

1917 2017



FRANCIS LEDWIDGE POETRY & THE FIRST WORLD WAR 1917-2017

Centenary Seminar at Slane Castle, County Meath
14th October 2017



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

PROGRAMME

9.00am

REGISTRATION

9.45am

WELCOME

Cllr. Gerry O'Connor, Cathaoirleach, Meath County Council

Rosemary Yore, Chair, Francis Ledwidge Museum Committee

9.50am

OFFICIAL OPENING

Eiléan Ni Chuilleanáin, Ireland Professor of Poetry

10.00am-11.30am

THE POETRY OF FRANCIS LEDWIDGE, IRISH AND BRITISH CONTEXTS

Chaired by Gerald Dawe, Trinity College Dublin

Lucy Collins - Ledwidge Country

Jim Haughey - 'The helpless child of circumstance'? Ledwidge's poems about enlistment

Terry Phillips - The Experience of War

Nerys Williams - Poet(s) of the Black Chair: Reading Hedd Wyn with Francis Ledwidge

11.30am -11.45am

COFFEE/TEA

11.45am-1.00pm

FRANCIS LEDWIDGE'S WAR

Chaired by Philip Orr

Myles Dungan - Ledwidge the Warrior

Frank Ledwidge - The Attack on Kidney Hill, 15th August 1915

1.00pm-2.00pm

LUNCH

2.00pm-3.15pm

FRANCIS LEDWIDGE - A READING OF HIS POEMS

Chaired by Peter Fallon, with contributions from Gerald Dawe, Eiléan Ni Chuilleanáin, Philip Orr and Gerard Smyth.

3.15pm-4.00pm

OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION

Chaired by Myles Dungan with Fran Brearton, Tom French and Frank Ledwidge

4.00pm

MEATH LAUNCH - *A Bittern Cry (Edited by Tom French)*

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In this anniversary year marking the centenary of Francis Ledwidge's death at the Front during World War 1 it is sometimes forgotten that more than anything else Francis Ledwidge was a poet, with a steadily growing reputation in the literary capitals of Ireland, Great Britain and the United States. His death robbed Irish literature of an important figure of transition between the folkways, customs and experience of rural Ireland and the shock and awe of modern warfare that erupted into the early decades of the Twentieth Century. How Ledwidge would have developed had he survived the killing fields of the Great War is an unanswerable question but one which is likely to surface during the course of this seminar, 'Francis Ledwidge – Poetry & the First World War 1917-2017' organised by Meath County Council and the Francis Ledwidge Museum Committee, Slane.

It is an important moment for all of us interested in Francis Ledwidge, as poet and as soldier, to gather and take stock of his legacy. Significant commemorations have already taken place in the various sites associated with Ledwidge, at Richmond Barracks, Inchicore, at Islandbridge in Dublin, and at Ebrington Barracks, Derry. The State Ceremony in the cottage he grew up in, the erection of a statue in his honour, and the beautiful commemorative postage stamp produced by An Post recognise his national importance. Events in the battlefields themselves – and now at Slane Castle, this unique gathering of writers, poets, academics and other Ledwidge experts honours the poet.

This may be the beginning of a new initiative - Ledwidge Studies - bringing to a wider audience the achievement of this courageous and inspirational man alongside a deepening understanding of the Ireland he came from, revisiting its culture, politics, history and traditions. If so, the Centenary Seminar will justly mark Francis Ledwidge's centenary with future generations in mind.

Gerald Dawe

BIOGRAPHIES

Fran Brearton is a Professor of Modern Poetry at Queen's University Belfast, and Director of the Seamus Heaney Centre. Her research interests are primarily in British and Irish Poetry of the 20th and 21st centuries. Her first book was a study of the effects of the First World War on 20th-century Irish poetry; most recently, she co-edited (with Alan Gillis) *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry*.

Lucy Collins is a lecturer in English Literature at University College Dublin. Recent books include *Contemporary Irish Women Poets: Memory and Estrangement* (2015) and *Poetry by Women in Ireland: A Critical Anthology 1870-1970* (2012). Her current project is a study of the printing and reading of Irish poetry in the first half of the twentieth century.

Gerald Dawe is an Irish poet and Professor Emeritus and Fellow of Trinity College Dublin. He has published eight collections of poetry including *Selected Poems* (2012) and *Mickey Finn's Air* (2014) and edited *Earth Voices Whispering: Irish War Poetry 1914-1945* (2008). His other publications include *Of War and War's Alarms* (2015) which includes a chapter on Francis Ledwidge.

Myles Dungan is a writer and broadcaster. He presents the RTE Radio 1 programme 'The History Show' and the weekly radio column 'On This Day'. He is the author of a number of books on Irish and American history, including *Irish Voices from the Great War* and *How the Irish Won the West*. In 2007 and 2011 he was awarded Fulbright Scholarships to the University of California, Berkeley. In 2012 he was awarded a PhD by Trinity College, Dublin.

