National Famine Commemoration 2010

Murrisk, Co. Mayo
May 10th-16th, 2010

Muraisc, Co. Mhaigh Eo
Bealtaine 10-16, 2010
**The National Famine Commemoration, Murrisk Co. Mayo.**

The 2010 National Famine Commemoration will be held on Sunday May 16th, in the village of Murrisk, at the foot of Croagh Patrick. A programme of lectures and events has been organised for the week leading up to the event. The programme illustrates the historical aspects of Famine in Ireland, through Art, Archaeology, History, Literature, Song and Music, and highlights the stark realities of famine prevalent today in many parts of the world.

**Comóradh Náisiúnta an Ghorta Mhóir, Muraisc, Co. Mhaigh Eo**

Tionófar Lá Náisiúnta Cuimhneacháin an Ghorta Mhóir 2010 i Muraisc, sráidbhaile ag bun Chruach Phádraig, Dé Domhnaigh 16ú Bealtaine. Bunaíodh Coiste Áitiúil Cuimhneacháin an Ghorta Mhóir chun clár léachtaí agus imeachtaí le linn na seachtaine roimh an Lá Cuimhneacháin a chur le chéile. Clúdóidh an clár gnéithe den Ghorta Mór agus an dóigh a ndeachaigh sé i bhfeidhm ar ealaín, sheandálaíocht, litríocht, amhránaíocht, cheol agus mheon na ndaoine, agus an ceangal láidir atá acu le cabhair agus faoiseamh daonnúil dá bharr.
Join Mayo-based novelist and songwriter Brendan Graham, for a reflective and informative evening of one writer’s experiences in exploring his response to the Great Famine through fiction and song: how it all began, the research, the writing, the challenges.

Brendan Graham’s debut novel The Whitest Flower, much of which is set in Co. Mayo during the Great Famine, was a No. 2 Bestseller in Ireland, and has been translated into a number of languages. It became a required text for Boston’s MIT Women’s Studies syllabus and, along with its sequel The Element of Fire, is listed as ‘support fiction’ for Ireland’s Leaving Certificate History Syllabus. The Sunday Times, Canberra called The Whitest Flower ‘An important addition to the Irish national story’.

As a songwriter, Graham has had similar critical and commercial success, with his song You Raise Me Up (music by Rolf Lovland), becoming one of the most successful songs in popular music history. The Irish Times has referred to Graham as, a ‘Musical Midas in the Mayo Silence’, with Hot Press magazine, describing him as ‘one of the most in-demand songwriters in the world’, while, in an article about the song tradition in Ireland, legendary scribe Con Houlihan wrote - ‘Some of the best poetry being produced in this country today is in the form of song, Christy Moore and Brendan Graham and Jimmy McCarthy are touched by genius.’

Other of his songs, Rock ‘n’ Roll Kids: The Voice: Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears: Winter, Fire & Snow and Crucán na bPáiste, will be known to many. His most recent song – Across The Rio Grande - written with The Chieftains’ Paddy Moloney and narrated by Liam Neeson, was described by one reviewer as ‘the epic centrepiece’ of The Chieftains much lauded album, SAN PATRICIO, with Graham’s lyrics widely reproduced in the LA Times, The New York Times, etc. In April 2010, his songs were on six of the top ten albums on the USA’s Billboard World Music Chart.

In what promises to be a memorable night in the atmospheric surroundings of Holy Trinity Church, Brendan will speak about and read excerpts from his ‘documentary novel’, The Whitest Flower. The readings will be interspersed by songs, written for his novel’s main character, Ellen - and sung by special guest Cathy Jordan, vocalist with ‘Dervish’ for the past two decades, accompanied by Feargal Murray on piano.
Michael Gibbons

The Legacy of the Famine on the Landscape

Archaeology - Seandálaíocht

8:00 pm | Hotel Westport

Michael Gibbons Archaeologist, based in Clifden Co. Galway has 30 years experience working as an archaeologist throughout Ireland, having previously worked for the Museum of London and the Department of Antiquities in Jerusalem. A former director of The Site and Monuments Records of the OPW for 10 years and of the Archaeological Committee of the Heritage Council, his expertise is on Ireland’s Pilgrimage Tradition.

Michael is currently mapping the inter-tidal zone archaeology of the coast of County Mayo and Galway. As a member of the Croagh Patrick Archaeological Committee he is no stranger to Murrisk. He will be speaking on the impact of the famine on the landscape that surrounds us. This promises to be a very interesting and richly-illustrated lecture on one of the least studied aspects of the famine, demonstrating the enormous landscape legacy that this pivotal event in our history has bequeathed to us.

Bronach Joyce

Famine Walking Tour

Walking - Siúlóid

11:00 am | Starts at the Clew Bay Heritage Centre, The Quay, Westport

Bronach Joyce, Curator of the Clew Bay Heritage Centre, will be leading an Historical Walking Tour highlighting aspects of famine in Westport and the Clew Bay area. The tour is on foot and covers over 3 km, starting at The Clew Bay Heritage Centre on Westport Quay. The walk incorporates various locations including the site of the Old Workhouse and Lord Altamont’s Town House (now the Tourist Office), finishing in Westport Town Centre. Bronach is a mine of information on the history of Clew Bay and the surrounding area and encourages dialogue and questions during her highly informative walking tours.

Catherine Marshall

“The kind of thing no painter should represent...”

Visual representations of the Great Famine.

Art History - Stair na hEalaíne

8:00 pm | Customs House, The Quay, Westport

Catherine Marshall has lectured on History of Art at UCD, Trinity and the NCAD. She was the first Head of Collections at the Irish Museum of Modern Art 1995 -2006 and is currently on secondment to the Royal Irish Academy where she is Co-editor, Vol. V, Irish Art and Architecture. She has been twice Chairman of the Irish Association of Art Historians, a board member of the Douglas Hyde Gallery 1992- 1995 and currently, of the Butler Gallery, Kilkenny. In 2007 she was responsible for the Visual Arts and Architecture component of the Arts Council’s Touring Experiment. Catherine is a regular contributor to RTE’s Sunday Miscellany.

Catherine’s illustrated lecture on the visual representations of the Great Famine will look at the particular difficulties of representing tragedy, difficulties that are compounded by colonial politics and the politics of representation. The lecture will draw on the history of artists’ responses to the Great Famine, their successes and their failures, the nature of the solutions they offered to the issues it raised and the impact of their responses on the people of Ireland and the Irish Diaspora to the present day. It will look at direct representations of the catastrophe, such as Daniel McDonald’s “The Discovery of the Potato Blight” and more indirect allusions to it in the work of artists such as Daniel McLise,
and related images of evictions and emigration by artists ranging from the Scottish painter Erskine Nicol, Margaret Allen and Henry Jones Thaddeus, to contemporary artists such as Alanna O’Kelly, and from painting, and graphic illustrations to sculpture and new media. Finally, the lecture will conclude by relating the challenge of representing of Irish suffering and loss to projects to mark other major catastrophes, in particular, the Jewish Holocaust.

Murrisk - Muraisc  
**Irish Music Night**  
Murrisk Rambling House Night

Traditional Music - *Ceol Traidisiúnta*  
8:30 pm - 10:00 pm | Murrisk Community Centre

The Murrisk Rambling House Night is an evening of traditional Music and Song by local musicians and singers to be held in the Murrisk Community Centre, at the foot of Croagh Patrick.

Murrisk - Muraisc  
**Murrisk Traditional Irish Music Session**

Irish Music - *Ceol Traidisiúnta*  
8:00 pm - 9:00 pm | Teach na Míosa, Murrisk

A Session of Traditional Music, to be held in Teach na Míosa, Murrisk at the foot of Croagh Patrick, featuring Irish Music and Song.

Prof. Peter Gray  
**Religion and the Great Famine**  
The impact on religion in Ireland

Historian - *Staráí*  
2:30 pm | Turlough House, Castlebar

The National Museum of Ireland’s contribution to 2010 commemoration is the hosting of a special lecture by Professor Peter Gray. Prof. Gray is Professor of Modern Irish History at Queens University, Belfast. He is a specialist on the Great Famine and the politics of poverty and land in nineteenth century Ireland.

The title of the lecture is Religion and the Great Famine, and in it Professor Peter Gray will look at the role played by religion and the Religious during the Great Famine, and the impact the catastrophe had on religion in Ireland. The lecture will take place in the National Museum of Ireland Country Life, Turlough Park, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

Admission is free, however this lecture is the only event for which booking is required and which has been organised by the National Museum of Ireland, Turlough House Tel: 094 90 31755.
William Henry  

**The Horror of Famine**

Literature / History - Litríocht / Stair  
8:00 pm | Westport Leisure Park

William Henry is a local historian, archaeologist and author from Galway City. He is a committee member of the Galway Archaeological & Historical Society and a former committee member of the Old Galway Society. He is also a former director of Galway Civic Trust and was the recipient of a number of awards, the latest being the Mayoral Award Winner for Heritage, Environment & Conservation in 2007. William has written 12 historical books, his latest predominantly on the subject of the Famine being the highly acclaimed ‘Coffin Ship’. This book traces the journey of the coffin ship St. John and the lives of its occupants. The lecture will focus on the impact of famine on the western seaboard, in context of his most recent historical books.

Bronach Joyce  

**Famine Walking Tour**

Walking - Siúlóid  
3:00 pm | Starts at the Clew Bay Heritage Centre, The Quay, Westport

Bronach Joyce, Curator of the Clew Bay Heritage Centre, will be leading an Historical Walking Tour highlighting aspects of famine in Westport and the Clew Bay area. The tour is on foot and covers over 3 km, starting at The Clew Bay Heritage Centre on Westport Quay. The walk incorporates various locations, including the site of the Old Workhouse and Lord Altamont’s Town House (now the Tourist Office), finishing in Westport Town Centre. Bronach is a mine of information on the history of Clew Bay and the surrounding area and encourages dialogue and questions during her highly informative walking tours.
John O’Shea

Famine Lecture

8:00 pm | Holy Trinity Church, Newport Rd, Westport

John O’Shea is the Chief Executive of GOAL, the charity he founded in Dublin in 1977. Since its inception, GOAL has spent in excess of €600 million on humanitarian programmes in over 50 countries. Over 1,500 GOAL personnel and many thousands of local staff have worked in the developing world on GOAL’s behalf and the organization has responded to every major humanitarian disaster since 1977.

Across GOAL’s fields of operation, 2,500 locally-based staff are employed alongside the GOAL personnel, where together they deliver on a range of humanitarian programmes in 11 countries: Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Haiti.

John is no stranger to Mayo, having spent a number of his formative years here. John will deliver in his familiar and recognizable style, of hard hitting plain speech, on the reality of Famine today and how it affects many countries across the Globe.
National Commemoration Day - Lá Náisiúnta Cuimhneacháin
1:00 pm | Murrisk - Murasic

The 2010 National Famine Commemoration will take place in Murrisk Millennium Park on Sunday, 16th May at 1pm. The commemoration programme will open with a ceremony in which the local community will be greatly involved and it will culminate in the formal State ceremonial event, which will include the National flag and military honours, and wreath laying ceremonies. The community element of the ceremony will include music, readings and prayers, tree planting, a candle lighting ceremony, and a minute of silent reflection. All are very welcome to attend.

Attendance at events:
Early arrival is advised at all events as tickets cannot be booked in advance. Seating capacity is limited to the size of the venues.

The exception to this is the Prof. Gray lecture in Turlough House which must be booked through the National Museum of Ireland on Tel: 094 90 31755.

All of the speakers lecture/perform in a voluntary capacity. All the events leading up to the National Famine Commemoration Day of May 16th have no cover charge, but attendees are invited to make a voluntary donation at the door to Famine Relief Charities. A small percentage of the monies received will go towards covering the nominal costs of hosting the events.

For further information please contact: Westport Town Council, Altamont Street, Westport, Co. Mayo Tel: 098 50400.

Tuilleadh eolais: Comhairle Baile Chathair na Mart, Sráid Altamont, Cathair na Mart, Co. Mhaigh Eo 098 50400.