



LEAD KINDLY LIGHT

3rd
INTERNATIONAL
Percy
French
Summer
School

CASTLECOOTE
HOUSE

and

Events at Roscommon
Library Services

13th—15th July
2011

The Percy French Summer School gratefully acknowledges the support of the following for the Summer School 2011

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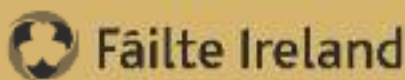
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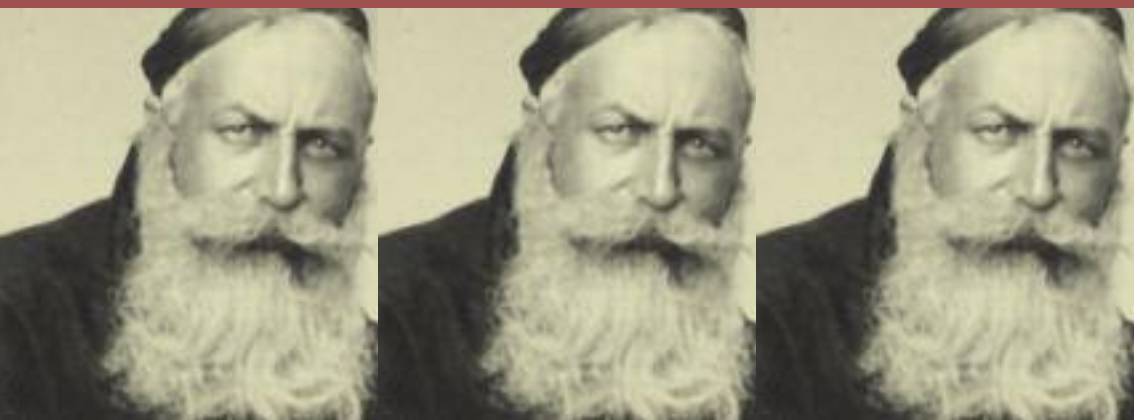
The ongoing work of the Percy French Summer School highlights the urgent need to establish a permanent Percy French room in Roscommon. It is intended that this will house a collection of memorabilia, documents and artefacts from Percy French's career, sited in the library and will become a great tourist attraction.
Contact www.percyfrench.ie

Special thanks to Sean Freyne, Professor Emeritus of Theology of the School of Religions and Theology, Trinity College Dublin, who has been very supportive of the Summer School, a long-time confidant, mentor and friend

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THE THIRD
INTERNATIONAL

PERCY FRENCH SUMMER SCHOOL

CASTLECOOTE HOUSE
13th to 15th July, 2011

CASTLECOOTE HOUSE
CASTLECOOTE, CO. ROSCOMMON
Telephone: +353 90 66 63794
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Finding our future in our past

The enduring inspiration of Percy French

Percy French's songs in part explore the issues of identity. In many ways this search for identity is a very personal one. I think Horace Kallen put it best when he said, 'We share a common language but our own peculiar dialect'.

In his poem, **Song**, Seamus Heaney writes that poetry is 'close to the music of what happens'. Percy French's ear is exceptionally sensitive to the music all around him. Songwriting serves two functions in a society: a conserving force identifying the aspects of society that are good and ought to be retained, and a dissenting force highlighting the elements of a society that are destructive and ought to be modified or replaced. **Are you right there Michael** is the most obvious of Percy French's songs in that category. I suspect that with his feel for people today instead of talking about the rail service, he would be satirising the health service—not the many great people who work in it—but the dysfunctional system itself which causes so much suffering to so many.

In the songbook of Percy French the ordinary becomes the locus of extraordinary insight. Apart from his obvious songs like **The Emigrant's Letter** and **The Emigrant Ship**, few commentators have addressed the issue of emigration in a more emotionally engaging and humanizing way than Percy French in songs **The Mountains of Mourne** and **Come back Paddy Reilly**. **Paddy Reilly** although personalised, reflects emigration in Ireland on a smaller level, its emigrants letter too highlights.

Percy French songs anticipate what the late and great, John O'Donohue wrote in **Eternal Echoes**, 'Memory rescues experience from total disappearance . . . the grooves in the mind hold traces and vestiges of everything that has ever happened to us. Nothing is ever lost or forgotten . . . a ruin is never simply empty. It remains a vivid temple of absence'.

Although he was born just seven years after Black '47, the deadliest year in the Great Famine, Percy French grew up at a time when the folk memory of the famine was very strong. Many people for example refused to travel long distances without taking some food in their pockets lest they be caught by the hunger like so many of their forefathers. Thinking of **The Mountains of Mourne** and in particular the line 'They don't grow potatoes'—suggests a deliberate turning back on the past, the past was backward—that was most reflected in the widespread abandonment of the Irish language after the Famine.

People like me who left school in the 1980s witnessed many of our classmates leave the country and we will never forget the lengthy queues outside the American Embassy. We thought that those days were behind us once the Celtic Tiger started to roar but in the last two years they have returned again with a bang—this year 60,000 Irish people will emigrate. The fact that his songs about the pain of emigration have such a contemporary resonance is Percy French's triumph as a songwriter—but our tragedy as a people.

The Ireland of Percy French was an island with serious economic problems. As we survey the economic wreckage of today we see so many mistakes made and such obvious ones. Such a great part of our lives wasted, all of us. And sometimes there is nothing to believe in and it appears that the only thing stringing all of us together is the domino of loss. Percy French's songs reflect the peculiar mix of shadows and light that is life.

I have always believed though that Percy French is Ireland's answer to Jane Austen with songs like **Little Brigid Flynn** and **The Night Miss Cooney Eloped**. In fact his song **McBrien's Heifer** by taking us into the world of the dowry effectively rewrites the famous opening line of **Pride and Prejudice**—on the lines of: it is a fact universally acknowledged that a father of a daughter must provide an ample dowry! Likewise I have often wondered if John Cleese had heard **Mick's Hotel** when he wrote **Fawlty Towers**!

Percy French had music in his soul and soul in his music. In our materialistic age anybody who connects us with our souls is worthy of celebration. He was a man of great generosity—as reflected in the way he donated part of his fees for his performances to the Red



Cross. He knew instinctively that individuals need to surrender their self-interest for the greater good so that the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts. This is a crucial lesson in the Ireland of NAMA—where the focus on the me culture sometime seems to be the number one national pastime.

The songwriter cannot simply slavishly follow the path of generations gone by. They must find a new avenue. In certain respects Percy French's predicament is akin to that of us in Ireland today. We too are at an in-between time in its history, caught between a rich tradition and an as yet unformed new direction. As the old tree of established structures is dying it is not easy to graft anew to the future vine.

From a personal point of view Percy like many of us today harbours a certain longing for the more simple past and traditional practices. Sometimes we over-analyse things. Sometimes we make extremely complicated what is really very simple. The enduring appeal of Percy French is because—he wrote great songs.

Reading Gay Byrne's autobiography it struck me that he was a hard man to impress because he saw it all as a host from Mother Teresa to Sinéad O'Connor—and he was talking about the stand out moments of his time on the Late, Late Show. You would expect that there would be many, but there were only a handful. One was Don McLean—at a time when he was one of the biggest names in the music business after the success of **American Pie**. Gay asked him what he would sing and when he said **The Mountains of Mourne** he thought it would be another nice song but nothing more. Yet when Don McLean started singing it was immediately obvious that this was something very special—because of the grip he had on the audience and the emotional power of the song. That was a big compliment from Gay Byrne. It was a great tribute to Don McLean as a singer—but it is in turn a great compliment to Percy French's talents as a songwriter.

To conclude, Percy French's song-writing distils life's experiences through his sensitive verses and indeed he could also easily be classified as a philosopher, revolutionary, humanist, torch bearer of human freedom, conserver in the sense of transmitting the signal of the spirit for the rest of time into the world, a vital link in the cultural memory.

Dr. John Scally

Wednesday • 13TH July

PERCY FRENCH SUMMER SCHOOL 2011

10.00 AM LECTURE

Gaye Ashford

**Women who read are dangerous:
the female education debate in 18th century Ireland**

11.00 AM, TEA/COFFEE

11.15 AM LECTURE

Brian O'Connell

**History of the building of Castlecoote
from the Catholic Confederacy (1642) to the present day**

12.15 PM LECTURE

Albert Siggins

Trades, Crafts and People of Old Fuerty and Castlecoote

2.00 PM GARDENS OPEN

DAILY RATE

Three lectures, tea/coffee, lunchtime recital, €30

SPECIAL RATE

€99 for all 2011 events including recitals and concert

Thursday • 14TH July

PERCY FRENCH SUMMER SCHOOL 2011

10.00 AM LECTURE

Dr Julie Anne Stevens

**Political Animals & Edwardian Ireland:
Percy French and Somerville & Ross**

11.00 AM, TEA/COFFEE

11.15 AM LECTURE

Patsy McGarry

Kindly light in the works of Percy French and John Henry Newman

12.15 PM LECTURE—QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Tim Pat Coogan

Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan TD CHAIR

**Sure we’re not right Michael, Sure we’re not!
A reflection on the contemporary political and economic crises
with apologies to ‘The West Clare Railway’ by Percy French**

2.00 PM RECITAL

Brian Munn, Michael Banahan & Teresa O’Donnell (Harp)

Midday Medley

3.00 PM GARDENS OPEN



Percy French playing the banjo for his family and brother
Photo courtesy North Down Percy French Society

Friday • 15TH July

PERCY FRENCH SUMMER SCHOOL 2011

10.00 AM LECTURE

Dr John Scally

Finding identity in a community

11.00 AM, TEA/COFFEE

11.15 AM ILLUSTRATED TALK

Paul O'Kelly

Percy French paintings: a light in the darkness

12.15 PM KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr Padraic Conway

Still uncreated? Newman, Joyce and the Irish conscience

2.00 PM LUNCHTIME RECITAL

A selection from his collaboration with Houston Collison

Friday's French Frolics

3.00 PM GARDENS OPEN

8.00 PM EVENING CONCERT

Bryan Hoey (Tenor) & **Teresa O'Donnell** (Harp)



Comhairle Chontae
Ros Cómain

Roscommon County Council Library Services

Roscommon County Council: Library Services is once again delighted to be associated with the Percy French Summer School. A strong relationship has been built over the last three years that has seen our collaboration develop into a showcase for the unique and talented Percy French. Library Services provide an important avenue for a range of cultural, educational, and recreational needs of people of all ages throughout the county.

Library Services supports and engages with historical, heritage, tourism, community events and projects throughout the county that highlight Percy French's unique contribution to our cultural heritage. In order to further promote the festival to an ever expanding audience, this year's launch and exhibition will be staged in the wonderful, historical surroundings of King House in Boyle.

The County Library continues to acquire collection material in relation to Percy French and all of these items will be part of our exhibition this year.

In order that the younger generation can have an appreciation of the historical and musical significance of French's work, Library Services continues to develop educational and learning opportunities for children. The Library Services' Summer Events Programme of themed art, poetry and music workshops for children proved to be a considerable success last year and we are aiming to continue that good work in parallel with the 2011 Summer School.

Richie Farrell County Librarian



Roscommon County Library

Percy French Events 2011

7.00 PM

FRIDAY, 1ST JULY

Official launch

King House, Main Street, Boyle, Co. Roscommon

7.30 PM

Percy French in Ireland 1957 to today

Talk by Liam Byrne

8.00 PM

A Medley of Percy French Songs

Roscommon Drama Group

TUESDAY 12TH JULY–SATURDAY 23RD JULY

French Miscellany, an exhibition of Percy French items

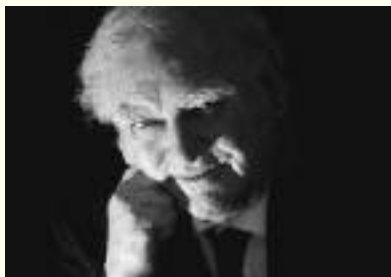
County Library, Abbey Street, Roscommon

9.00 am–6.00 pm

A Child for Life

ART, POETRY AND MUSIC FOR CHILDREN 6–10 YEARS

Boyle Library	Tuesday, 12th July	2.30pm–4.30pm
Strokestown Library	Wednesday, 13th July	3.30pm–5.30pm
Castlereagh Library	Thursday, 14th July	2.30pm–4.30pm
Ballaghaderreen Library	Friday, 15th July	2.30pm–4.30pm



Tim Pat Coogan

Tim Pat Coogan is Ireland's best known historical writer. His pioneering work **Ireland since The Rising** (1966) gave a new generation an insight into the civil war, partition, the emergence and constitutional development of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the unconstitutional development of the IRA. His book, **The IRA** (1970) became the definitive work on the subject. His biography of Michael Collins, (1990) rekindled interest on both sides of the Atlantic. Coogan's other works include **On The Blanket**, a study of the dirty protest preceding the hunger strikes of 1981; **Long fellow, long shadow**, a biography of de Valera; the first major work on the Irish diaspora, **Wherever Green is Worn** (2000); and **Ireland in the 20th Century** (2003). Coogan's career as an author and journalist (editor **The Irish Press** 1968–87) has seen him interview figures as diverse as Ronald Reagan and Mumar Ghadafi and made him a well known personality on both radio and TV. In 2008 his memoirs were published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.



Dr John Scally

John Scally is the Beresford Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History in the School of Religions and Theology in Trinity College, Dublin. He is the author of over twenty books. His most recent works are: **Mother Teresa: The Irish Connection** and **100 GAA Greats**. He delivered a paper to the 2010 Percy French Summer School on the enduring significance of the music of Percy French. A native of Curraghboy in County Roscommon he retains strong links with the county. He is the founder of a voluntary organisation called **The Rossies** that supports charitable and worthy projects in Roscommon. He lives in Dublin and suffers from A.S.S.—Addicted to Sport Syndrome. His sports books include: **Load of Balls: Football's Funny Side**; **GAA: An Oral History**; **The Best of the West: GAA Greats of Connacht**; **Odd-shaped Balls: Mischief-makers, Miscreants and Mad-hatters of Rugby**, and biographies of Tony Ward, Ger Loughnane, and former legendary Roscommon footballer, Dermot Earley. He has devised, presented, scripted and produced documentaries and series for RTÉ Radio One and RTÉ Television.



Bryan Hoey

Bryan Hoey is one of Ireland's most versatile singers with a voice equally at home in grand opera, operetta, and musicals. His formidable repertoire includes **Die Fledermaus**, **Gypsy Baron**, **Student Prince**, **My Fair Lady**, **L'Elisir D'amore**, **Maritana**, **Lily of Killarney**, **Bohemian Girl** and the major roles in Gilbert & Sullivan. In 2007 he sang Normano in **Lucia Di Lammemor** with Anna Livia Opera (Dublin) and with the Drawing Room Opera Company (Dublin). Bryan has sung as principal tenor with Opera Theatre Company and many societies including: Musical Arts Opera Company, Island Opera (Isle of Man) and Wexford Opera Festival. In oratorio he has sung with many of the leading choral societies and choirs and his concert work includes the RTÉ Symphony and Concert Orchestras. He has featured on The Late Late Show; The Likes of Mike; Live at 3; Overture and Music of the Nation. Recent performances include Rossini's **Stabat Mater** and Mozart's **Requiem** and **Coronation Mass**. He has been awarded the John McCormack Medal for service to music by the Bank of Ireland and the Vocal Heritage Society of Ireland in 1998.



Dr Julie Anne Stevens

Dr Stevens lectures on English Literature in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra (DCU). In **The Irish Scene in Somerville and Ross** (2007) she re-evaluates 19th-century women writers and shows how these commentators on Irish rural life immersed themselves in continental literary and visual traditions. Contributions to books include an assessment of Elizabeth Bowen's critical afterlife; the study of depictions of Georgian Dublin in art and literature called **Views of Georgian Dublin: Perspectives of the City** (2008); a collaborative work with Dr. Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch for the book, **Local/Global: Women Artists in the 19th Century** (2006); and **Divided Worlds: Studies in Children's Literature** (2007). Interest in landscape studies has resulted in work on Emily Lawless and her recording of The Burren, partly published in **Ireland: Space, Text, Time** (2005). Recently she presented, 'George Moore, Somerville & Ross and the Reconstruction of Optical Experience in Late 19th Century Irish Short Fiction' at the Ireland and the fin de siècle' conference, RIA, 2009.



Albert Siggins

Albert is a native of Roscommon town. He has been working with the National Museum of Ireland since 1972, more particularly with their new section Country Life since 2001. He is involved with the County Roscommon Historical and Archaeological Society for 25 years and Secretary of that group since 1987. The Society produces a Journal in which he has published a number of articles relating to local history. He is interested in the local history of his parish of Fuerty where he went to live in 1980. His interests include genealogy and photography.



Dr. Pádraic Conway

Pádraic Conway is Director of the UCD International Centre for Newman Studies and a Vice-President of University College Dublin. He was Principal Investigator for the project, *John Henry Newman: Global and Local Theologian*, funded as part of the Irish Government Structured Dialogue with Churches, Faith Communities and Non-Confessional Bodies programme. He has lectured on Newman in Europe, America and Australia and co-edited the volume *Karl Rahner: Theologian for the Twenty-first Century* (Peter Lang, 2010). He is author of the forthcoming *Judging Newman* (RIA).



Luke 'Ming' Flanagan

Luke 'Ming' Flanagan is married with two children and lives in Castlerea, County Roscommon. Luke Flanagan has been involved in politics since 1997 and was elected to Roscommon County Council in 2004 and 2009. He served as Mayor of Roscommon County Council up to his election as a poll topping Independent TD for the constituency in the recent general election. He is part of the new independent alliance in the Dail. He maintains a high profile as an ardent and passionate spokesperson for the rights of people to cut turf and is Chairperson of the National Turf Cutters Association.



Brian Munn

Brian Munn has been an actor and broadcaster since the age of 12 years, when he played his first role in a BBC Drama production. He has worked in all areas of the business from stage actor to television game show host, from Radio Drama Producer with RTÉ, to film actor. In films, he has been husband to Helen Mirren, in **Cal** and flirted with the star of **Misery**, Cathy Bates, in **P. S. I Love You**, and even had to beat up Tom Cruise in **Far and Away**. Brian has been a voice-over on Irish radio and TV commercials for an extraordinary range of products and services for over 35 years—you might not know the face but you will more than likely know the voice! However, his greatest professional joy is in reciting poetry. He presented a series of poetry programmes for Lyric FM.



Paul O'Kelly

Paul O'Kelly has written biographies of artists Pieter Sluis, Markey Robinson, and the American pop-art pioneer Andy Warhol. He has lectured on Warhol and Duchamp in the National Gallery of Ireland, and has given talks on Percy French, Markey Robinson, Victor Vasarely, Andy Warhol and others on RTÉ Radio 1, 2FM, RTÉ Television and the BBC. His first work of fiction, **Cameo Girl**, is published in the United States later this year. The lecture he will deliver expands on a talk given to Percy French enthusiasts during last year. It examines the connection between French's work as a satirist, songwriter and cartoonist, and his more serious work as an artist in watercolours.



Brian O'Connell

Brian O'Connell, director and founder of O'Connell Mahon Architects. He graduated from the School of Architecture UCD in 1968 with first class honours; President of the AAI in 1972; became a member of the RIAI in 1975; studied law at UCD and Kings Inns and was called to the Bar with first class honours in 1979. As President of the RIAI, 1990–91, Brian was a founder of the Architects Council of Europe, the representative body of the profession in the EU, and was assigned by them to assist in bringing Western European practices to the USSR and Eastern Europe. Brian worked as a Non-Attached Expert to the European Commission in the development of Directive Policy in the field of construction and chaired the GAIPCE commission on Construction Liability. He is also an Arbitrator and Conciliator in construction and associated matters. Brian has lectured at NUI in Contract Management. At the University of Ulster he lectures on the Law of Disability in Ireland, with particular emphasis on the implementation of universal access standards in buildings.



Patsy McGarry

Patsy McGarry, a Roscommon man, is Religious Affairs correspondent of **The Irish Times**. He has worked for Independent Newspapers, The Irish Press Group, Magill Magazine, and freelanced for RTÉ. In 1989 he set up the first independent radio newsroom in the Republic at **Capital Radio** (now FM104). He was **The Irish Press** theatre critic 1990–1995. In 1992 he received a national media award for his **Sunday Independent** articles on the fall of Charles Haughey as Taoiseach, and in 1998 the Templeton European Religion Writer of the Year for his **Irish Times's** articles on Drumcree, the papal visit to Cuba, and criticism of the Irish Churches for failing to practise what they preached on reconciliation. He edited **Christianity**, a collection of essays published by Veritas in 2001. **The Book of Jesus Report, a contemporary account of the four gospels**, a collection of his weekly columns in **The Irish Times**, was published by the paper in 2001. Other books are **While Justice Slept: The True Story of Nicky Kelly and the Sallins Train Robbery** (2006) and the official biography of President Mary McAleese, **First Citizen: Mary McAleese and the Irish Presidency** (2008).



Gaye Ashford

Gaye Ashford is a native of Co. Sligo but raised in Dublin, studied History and Geography as a mature student and graduated from St Patrick's College, Drumcondra with a BA (Hons) in Humanities in 2007. She is in the final year of her PhD researching children and childhood in 18th century Ireland at St. Patrick's College. Since 2008, Gaye has been in receipt of a fellowship scholarship from An Foras Feasa. Her research interests and publications include children in 18th-century Ireland, 19th-century Irish emigration, and family and local history.

Enjoy French's Irish Cuisine on the lawn at this year's Summer School

This summer on the lawns
of Castlecoote House we will be
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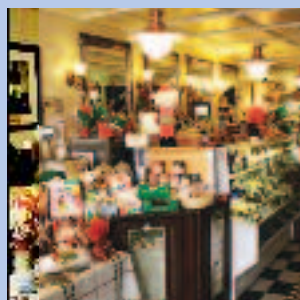
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Please see inside back cover

Background to the School

The founding of The Percy French Summer School seemed a natural progression once the dust had settled on the massive restoration project that is Castlecoote House.

Percy French ran deep in our family. Not just on my father's side (though he was instrumental in establishing the Percy French Committee in 1957 and the two major summer festivals that followed), he also had connections with my mother's family, the Flanagans. Michael Flanagan (c. 1855–1939), my great grandfather, owned Cloonyquinn Post Office and shop at the end of the avenue leading to the Frenchs' home, Cloonyquinn House. The Frenches, including Percy, regularly shopped, mailed, received post and telegrams there. Percy's nephew, Harry French, had my uncle, Michael Flanagan, chauffeur him almost everywhere. Michael remained a very active member of the Percy French Society right up until his death in 2005.

We grew up on Percy French's music and when I first met Bill Golding, in 1983, to my complete surprise, he already knew my father through Percy French. It transpired that my father had written to Bill asking for sponsorship for the Percy French Scholarship that he set up in 1966 (and still running). Bill, the star of RTÉ's biography of Percy French, *The Last Troubadour*, responded generously and during the restoration of Castlecoote House advised that we hold Percy French musical evenings when Castlecoote House was restored.

The Percy French room has been open to the public since 2001, and, although we have held many musical evenings featuring Percy French's music, it was not until the large music room was restored that the Percy French Summer School became a reality. The major contributors to the Percy French evenings at Castlecoote House were Bill Golding, Brian Munn and Teresa O'Donnell, so it was a natural progression that they assume the roles they now have with the School.

Michael D. Higgins was central to our plans to launch the school and his stirring opening address dealt with the context of Percy French's work—the world behind his words. This approach again forms the framework for this year's School. Michael D's later acceptance of the role of Honorary President of the Summer School reflects his *grá* for Percy French's work as well as his conviction that French's work forms a significant contribution to our literary history and to the world of art and entertainment.

The open armed greeting I received from the Roscommon County Librarian, Mr. Richie Farrell, was very encouraging and we welcome his continued support for the School. Last year and again this year we are absolutely delighted that the Department of Education and Skills has endorsed our Summer School Programme drawing teachers from three Counties, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon, and involving over 175 schools. This will take Percy French to new heights, strengthening dramatically his standing in our cultural heritage which hopefully will finally return him to his beloved native Roscommon. Much work has gone into organising this year's programme and credit to the late Oliver Nulty (Oriell Gallery), whose publication *Lead Kindly Light*, provided the basis of our school theme this year. We hope you will enjoy the rich and varied insights provided by some of our leading academics into the remarkable life of one of our own great troubadours, particularly in this wonderful setting.

Kevin Finnerty

Cavan County Museum

would like to commend The Percy French Summer School for its efforts in highlighting the remarkable contribution of Percy French to the world of art, literature and entertainment.

The Museum is a magnificent 19th century building situated amid extensive grounds nestling among the east Cavan lakes and drumlins and is an ideal starting point for a relaxing family day out.

A tour of the Museum's elegant exhibition galleries provides an insight into the heritage of Cavan from antiquity to recent times.

Thoughtfully designed, the galleries trace the history and heritage of County Cavan from prehistoric to pre-Christian times to rural life as it was in the 1950's. Rare and precious artefacts on display include the 4,000 year old Killycluggin stone and three-faced Corleck Head; the 1,000 year old Lough Erril Boat, medieval Sheela-na gigs. Also displayed are implements and machinery used by our ancestors as well as galleries of costume and sports.

Our wonderful Percy French Room shows a wide range of memorabilia

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Cavan County Museum
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F: 049-8544332

ccmuseum@eircom.net

www.cavanmuseum.ie

Tuesday to Saturday
10 am–5pm

Sunday (June to October)
2–6 pm

Closed Mondays

ACCOMMODATION

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- Tailored packages available for guests wishing to stay longer

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Bus transfer to and from Knock Airport: €20 each way per person
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BED & BREAKFAST

DONEELA HOUSE Gallowstown, Roscommon. t: +353 90 66 27135

NONI'S Castlecoote Village. t: +353 90 66 63367

ROSS HOUSE Quarry View, Roscommon. t: +353 90 66 28891



CASTLECOOTE HOUSE CASTLECOOTE, CO. ROSCOMMON

Telephone: +353 90 66 63794 info@castlecootehouse.com www.castlecootehouse.com

DIRECTIONS

Castlecoote House is 5 miles from Roscommon Town and a two-hour drive from Dublin

From Roscommon: take the R366 for 4 miles to Castlecoote, cross the bridge, the gates are directly ahead

GUIDED TOURS

Guided Tours of the House & Grounds, April to September, Wednesday–Sunday, 2pm to 6pm or by appointment