

Tulsk History Society Plaque Unveiling

Heritage Week, Sunday 18th August 2024 (12.30pm)



The Tulsk Parish Heritage Plaques commemorate prominent, and some forgotten, people, places and events associated with Tulsk parish. The project is an initiative of Tulsk History Society

MICHAEL (MIKE) ROGERS (1911-1994) was born in Ogulla, Tulsk in May 1911 to James and Jane (née Hamill) Rogers. As an Irish emigrant Mike joined his brother James in New Jersey in 1930. By



1933 Mike had secured a permanent job as a labourer in the Colgate-Palmolive soap factory. Soon after, he became a U.S. citizen. As America prepared to enter WWII, military conscription was introduced in 1940, but rather than being conscripted Mike chose to enlist voluntarily in the army in March 1941. Mike was shipped to the south of England in early 1944 to prepare for the land war with Germany. He was granted permission to visit his home in Ogulla where he spent a brief period meeting family and friends. The photograph in Kilgannon's pub (left) shows Mike in full uniform between his brothers Dominic and Bernard Joe, with Tom, Jim (U.S. based but pasted in afterwards) and Pat at the back.

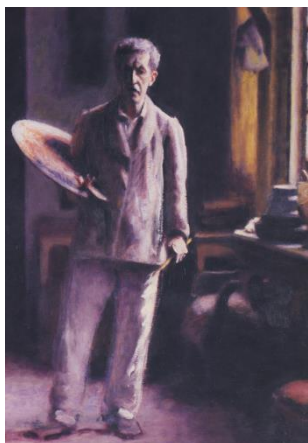
When D-Day dawned (June 6th, 1944) Mike Rogers headed towards Normandy beach in a landing craft. As it neared the beach, continuous enemy fire peppered the boats. When the ramp of his boat dropped, Mike waded into the water, water that was, in his own words, becoming "pink with blood." Under the intense bombardment Mike was hit with shrapnel to the chest and ribs. Despite his injuries, he kept surging forward and

managed to grab hold of an injured comrade, dragging him to shore to save his life. Mike would later be decorated for this act of bravery. He spent three months in hospital recovering from his injuries before returning to duty guarding German Prisoners of War (POWs). After his discharge from the army in October 1945, he returned to work at Colgate-Palmolive as an elevator operator until retiring in 1976. Mike rarely mentioned the war, preferring to get on with life. He paid return visits to Tulsk in 1970 and 1982. The memory of the man and his deeds will live on through his plaque.



MARY KELLY GORGES (1835-1911) was born into Cargins House, the daughter of the former landlord Daniel Kelly. She went on to become a writer and poet of some note. She was published widely in Irish, British and American magazines and newspapers. Mary's husband was John Gorges of Kilbrew, Co. Mayo, who was an adjutant in the Roscommon Militia. Mary was known primarily for her poetry, which appeared in the esteemed *Chambers Edinburgh Journal* from around the year 1890. Her poems, which were idyllic and descriptive, were then picked up by the papers and were 'carried into almost every corner of the world,' according to the *Cheltenham Examiner* of April 1912. As well as in Ireland and England, where her work appeared regularly in papers like the *Dublin Evening Post* and the *Yorkshire Post*, her poetry was published in newspapers right across the USA, from Rhode Island and Pennsylvania on the east coast, to states in the American West, like

Oregon, Idaho, and Iowa. Books she wrote included 'On Life's Journey; Poems and Ballads' and 'Killarney' - a travel book about a journey around County Kerry in her later years. Mary was known to be tied to her Celtic lineage and was described by one newspaper as a writer of 'exquisite memorial verse, of pure poetic strain'. She died in Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) Dublin in December 1911, and was buried in St. Mobhi's Churchyard, Glasnevin.



RODERIC O'CONNOR (1860-1940). Born in Milltown, Castleplunket in October 1860 to Roderic Joseph and Elanor Mary (née Browne), Roderic O'Connor has posthumously become one of Ireland's most esteemed, distinguished and expensive artists. He received his early art education in Dublin and furthered his studies in Antwerp and Paris – a city at the centre of the art world in the late 1800s. It was here that O'Connor became part of a community of artists who were pushing the boundaries of traditional painting. Known for his independent spirit and determination, O'Connor was deeply influenced by the works of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. These influences inspired him to explore new techniques and colour palettes. O'Connor spent a significant amount of time in Brittany, France, where he joined the Pont-Aven School; a group of artists led by Gauguin and known for their bold use of colour and expressive forms.

O'Connor's paintings from this period are known for their thick, textured brushstrokes and vivid colours. He often depicted the rugged Breton landscape and its inhabitants, capturing the essence of the region with his dynamic and innovative style. His technique involved layering complementary colours to create a sense of depth and vibrancy, setting his work apart from his contemporaries. Notable works from this period include "La Lisière du Bois" and "Yellow Landscape," which showcase his mastery of colour and form.

Despite his significant contributions to the style known as Post-Impressionism, O'Connor remained relatively unknown during his lifetime. His strong-willed nature and commitment to his artistic vision kept him dedicated to his work, regardless of his lack of fame. He continued to live and work in France, painting prolifically until his death in Nueil-sur-Layon in 1940. It was only in the latter part of the 20th century that his work began to receive the recognition it deserved.

Today, Roderic O'Connor is celebrated as a key figure in the development of modern art. His paintings are held in high esteem and are featured in major collections such as the National Gallery of Ireland and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. O'Connor's legacy lies in his fearless experimentation with colour and his ability to convey profound emotion through his art, cementing his place in art history.

TOM McHALE (1945-1977) was a native of Rathnagly, Tusk, born in September 1945 to William (Bill) and Mary (née Moloney) McHale. His father, the local school master, played the accordion and was deeply involved in promoting traditional music. Their home was a popular venue for music sessions which meant Tom and his siblings were immersed in music from an early age. He and his brother Mike (All-Ireland tin whistle champion in 1958) learned to play the tin whistle and flute as toddlers. He played with the Killina Ceili Band at the age of 14. After completing his secondary education at St. Jarlath's College, Tuam, Tom moved to Belfast to take up a job in banking. He quickly became involved with the traditional music scene there and gave up banking to concentrate on music. In May 1966, he travelled to the Fleadh Cheoil Boyle where he won the All-Ireland title for tin whistle playing. Some months later, he recorded an LP, 'All Ireland Whistling Champion at Boyle'. After a brief sojourn in



Germany, Tom rejoined the Killina Ceili Band and featured on radio and TV shows. In 1969 he went on the 'singing pub' circuit with locals, John Carlos and Michael Lohan, performing as The Provincials. Birmingham was Tom's next stop where he played in the early 1970s with the Birmingham Ceili Band. Returning to Ireland in 1972, he settled in Athlone where he continued on his music career. He also played football with Athlone GAA Club and won the instrumental music title at the 1973 All-Ireland Scor competition for the club. In May 1975, he began promoting Irish music sessions in the Jolly Mariner. This Monday night session was later named the Tom McHale Folk Club. Tom married Mary Fallon, a Dysart native, in 1973 and they became the parents of a son, Pdraig. Tom tragically died in July 1977 in a car crash while returning from playing music with his good friend, the late Tony Holleran. His contribution to Irish music as a player, adjudicator and promoter will be long remembered, especially by those who play the tin whistle.

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