

# News

## Eigse Michael Hartnett off to an earlier start

### NEWCASTLE WEST

Martin Byrnes

THIS year's Michael Hartnett Award for poetry will not be presented until the autumn.

The award, which is given on alternate years for works in Irish and English, is not part of the 2008 Eigse Michael Hartnett at Newcastle West because the eigse has been brought forward to become a spring event and kickstart the summer school season.

Eigse Michael Hartnett opens this Thursday, with the keynote address being given at the library by Benedictine monk, lawyer and writer, Andrew Nugent, with the intriguing title: What is Humanity – and What am I? A reading of Michael Hartnett's poetry by Limerick actor Andrew Bennett will follow.

The official opening will be performed for the second year by Cllr Kevin Sheahan, Cathaoirleach, Limerick County Council. The festival club will be in Cartledge's Bar on Michael Hartnett's native Maiden Street.

Newcastle West born Hartnett published over a score of poetry collections before his death, aged 58, in 1999. Limerick County Council arts office, under Joan McKernan, and with the assistance of a locally-drawn committee, instituted the eigse in 2000, making this the ninth year of the event. It is also supported by the Arts Council.

This Friday will feature daytime readings in primary schools given by poet Gabriel Fitzmaurice and novelist Vincent McDonnell. Second level students will have Interpreting Michael Hartnett, an arts workshop with drama facilitator Janette Madigan. In the library at noon,

Mr McDonnell will launch his latest book, aimed at children of 10 years and over, on the life of Michael Collins.

Again this year, the residents of St Ita's Community Hospital are not being ignored and a session of storytelling by Daisy Kearney, and music from Gerry Sheahan and Paddy Hefernan, will bring extra life to Friday afternoon.

In the evening, readings and chat will take place at the library with Peter Sheridan and Kevin Barry surrounding their work.

At 11pm, Frank O'Connor's translation and adaptation of Brian Merriman's Midnight Court will be staged at the Courthouse by Teaspach Theatre Company.

This Saturday commences with one of the more formal elements of the weekend, the Michael Hartnett Memorial Lecture, to be given this year by Paddy Bushe on the subject Poetry as Translation. This will be held in Courtenay Lodge Hotel, starting at 11am.

Eithne Strong from Glensharrold, was a near contemporary poet of Michael Hartnett, and her life and works will be recalled by members of her family from Dublin and beyond, as a bus, leaving Newcastle West library at 2pm, travels through her native place to an afternoon of readings and poetry at O'Shaughnessy's Bar, Glin.

That evening, in Courtenay Lodge Hotel, Michael D Higgins and Valerie Laws will read their poetry, with music and song by Louise Harrison and the festival club to follow.

"I think people attending this year's eigse will be spoilt for choice regarding the number of interesting and lively events," said Joan MacKernan. "Holding

the events in different locations around the town and the county, from the library to the courthouse to Glin, lends itself to lively gatherings and easy conversations.

"Eigse Michael Hartnett is a festival of words, in many guises, poetry, song, drama, and storytelling. And as one strolls around the town of Newcastle West to each of the events, one has the unique opportunity of meeting up with poets and writers and striking up a conversation," she said.



Poet Michael Hartnett: latest Eigse starts this weekend



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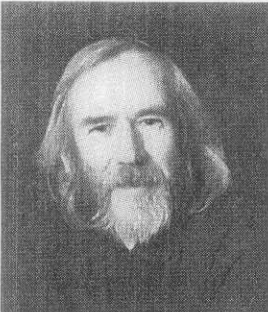
## Vincent's latest children's book examines Collins

### EIGSE LAUNCH

Norma Prendiville

A NEW book on Michael Collins, aimed at older children and teenagers, will be launched this Friday as part of Eigse Michael Hartnett.

The book, Michael Collins - Most Wanted Man, has been written by Vincent McDonnell, author of seven novels for children and two for adults, and who has been writer-in-



Author Vincent McDonnell: new children's book on Michael Collins

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