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■ **BRENDAN MCGEE**

Mary O'Rourke, Michael Harding, Brian Leyden, Roland Monsegu, Tarquin Blake, Triona Mullaney Dignam and John Clapison will all be in Boyle during the next ten days as part of the 24th annual Boyle Arts Festival, which runs from July 25th to August 3rd.

The Festival's spoken word and literature programme starts off with two talks, one by renowned artist, Eileen McDonagh and the other by Thomas Ryan PPRHA (Past president of the Royal Hibernian Academy). Both of these acclaimed and established artists will discuss their work in depth, during two separate lectures taking place in King House on Friday July 26th.

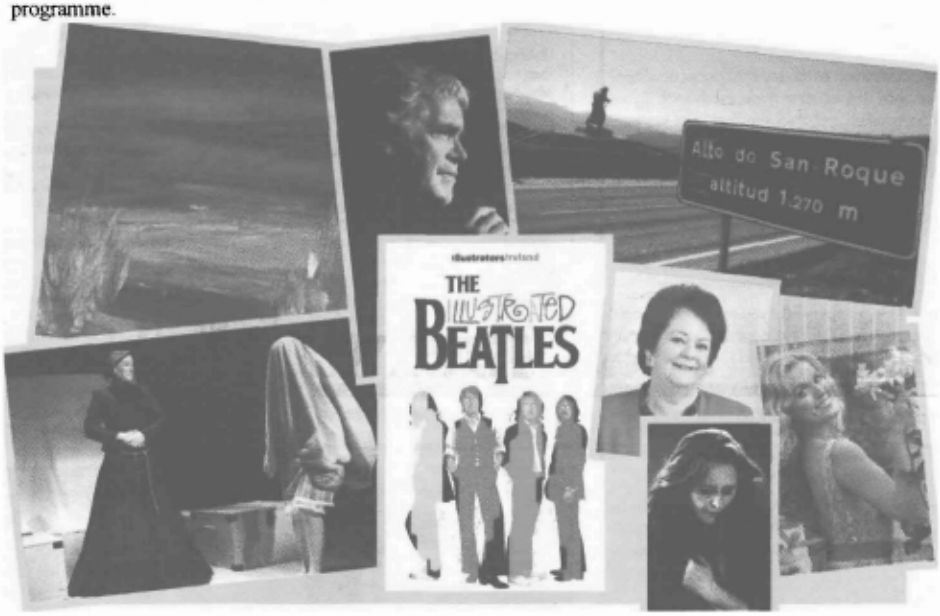
Writer and playwright Michael Harding, whose fiction works, include 'The Trouble with Sarah Gullion' and 'Priest' will conduct a reading of some of his books on Sat. July 27th at 6 pm in King House. Expect to hear selections from his most recent book, 'Staring at Lakes' which has been in the bestseller lists for several months.

An Evening with the Moylurg Writers is always a special event and this year the group celebrate their silver anniversary with an enchanting night of poetry, prose and song. The results of the recent BAF Poetry Competition will also be announced by writer Geraldine Mills, followed by a reading of her own work. Music will be performed by the Song Writers Collective. This very special event takes place on Sun. July 28th at 8 pm in King House.

Renowned writer, Brian Leyden drops by for a reading in the Presbyterian Church on Monday July 29th. Brian's work includes 'Departures', 'The Home Place' and 'Death and Plenty' – he has also written extensively for Sunday Miscellany and is a columnist with the Sligo Champion.

One of the highlights of BAF 2013 will be an appearance by former deputy Fianna Fáil leader, Mary O'Rourke. As one of the most successful and influential women in Irish public life, Mary has stories to tell that will surprise and amuse. She recently published her memoir 'Just Mary' and will read selections from it at a special appearance in the Church of Ireland on July 30th at 8 pm.

David Gillespie is Church warden for Ardcarne Church and he will present a fascinating tour of the Church and adjoining Cemetery on July 30th, while local man Barry Feely is a ninth generation stone-cutter, having started work in Feelystone, Boyle in 1955. Barry will present 'A Portrait in Stone' in King House on July 31st, showing examples of some of the great sculptures and monuments in Ireland, interspersed no doubt, with some humorous recollections of his sixty years in stone cutting.

Roland Monsegu is a Dublin-based Frenchman and director of caminoways.com. He will conduct an illustrated presentation and reading about The Camino de Santiago, the pilgrimage to the Cathederal of Santiago in north-western Spain, in St. Joseph's Resource Centre on August 2nd at 6 pm.

Saturday August 3rd is the date for two fascinating lectures on former 'big houses' in Ireland. Tarquin Blake is an explorer, photographer and historian and author of 'The Abandoned Mansions of Ireland'. He will share his knowledge of a number of local houses with a presentation in King House at 1 pm. Even closer to home is 'Rockingham House – A Journey Through a Vanished Mansion' – a presentation by Triona Mullaney Dignam and John Clapison, which examines life in Rockingham from the early 1800 until its demise in 1957. This illustrated talk takes place at 6 pm in King House. For more details on the lecture and literature events, please check the Festival programme.