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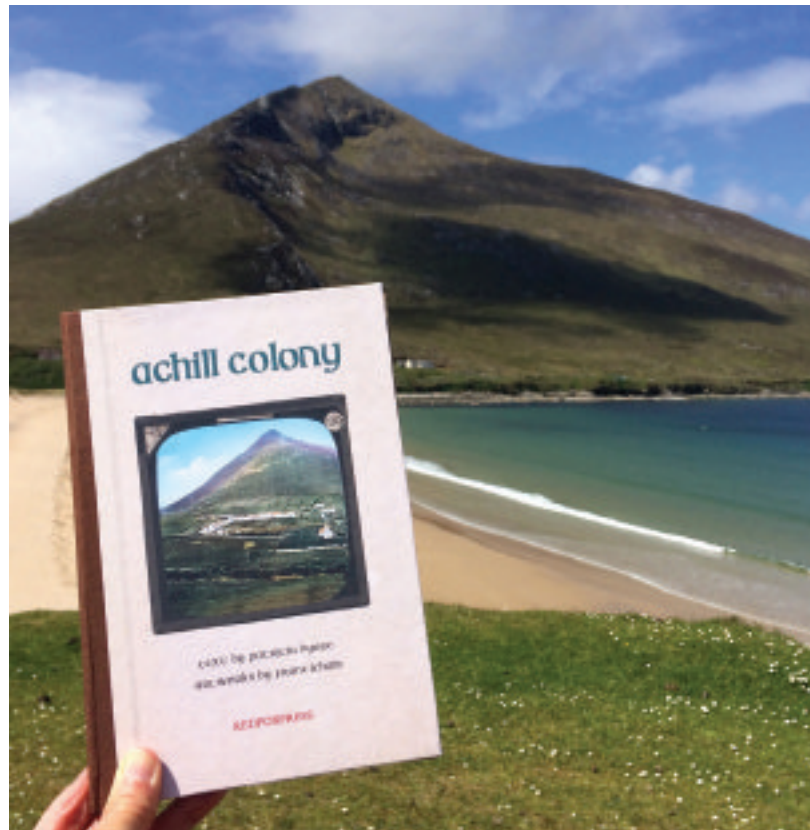
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IN RESIDENCE Elizabeth Reapy
named Mayo's new Writer in Residence
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▲ **NEW BOOK** 'Achill Colony' is beautifully bound and filled with vignettes and pithy extracts from various sources, movingly enhanced by pictures and images.

Recalling the Colony

ÁINE RYAN



YOU could call her an expert on the Achill Colony and the epic crusade for souls led by the Reverend Edward Nangle on the remote and famine-stricken outpost during the years of the Great Famine and beyond. Whilst Patricia Byrne's book, 'The Preacher and the Prelate' is a must-read for anyone interested in this fascinating story, her text in a newly published book of artwork and photographs offers a more poetic window onto this

dramatic period in the island's history.

Published by Redfoxpress, with images by owners, Francis Van Maele and Antic-Ham, together known as Franticham, the limited edition 'Achill Colony' is beautifully bound and filled with vignettes and pithy extracts from various sources, movingly enhanced by pictures and images.

Here is one of Patricia Byrne's observations: "I came to understand that, over the two centuries since Edward Nangle first set foot on Achill Island, the fallout from the Achill Colony has rippled through the generations.

The traces and marks of the development are vivid in what remains of the Colony settlement on the slopes of Slievemore."

Certainly, Franticham's images – ethereal, documentary, descriptive – they freeze-frame the past's continued presence in the built and natural heritage, ensuring this is a unique addition to the library of books about this island.

VOICES OF THE TIME

ON a page entitled 'Famine', three quotations encapsulate the evangelical colony and its work whilst juxtaposed on the opposite page with a tinged image of

two Celtic cross headstones on the side of Slievemore.

The first is from the Achill Missionary Herald, dated May 1846 in which it is announced: "We have undertaken to feed all the children who have been in attendance at our schools during the scarcity."

Isn't 'the scarcity' a rather gen-trified word for the mass destruction during the worst year of the Great Famine?

The second, is a letter by an Achill priest, Michael Gallagher, dated January 28, 1848:

"Poverty has compelled the greatest number of the [island] population to send their children

to Nangle's proselytising schools; he has at the moment one thousand children of the Catholics of the parish attending. They are dying of hunger, and rather than die they have submitted."

Again the word 'submitted' surely neutralises the visceral desperations that starvation brings. But, the use of such reserved language is most likely simply the style of the time.

Finally, the third extract is clearly the most revealing and objective. It is an excerpt from the American evangelist, Asenath Nicholson who ultimately became radicalised somewhat by her experiences of the exploi-

tation of the impoverished peasants of west Mayo. In her book, 'Annals of the Famine in Ireland', she writes:

"The children flocked by score and even hundreds [to the Colony schools]: they were dying with hunger and by going to these places they could 'keep the life' ... and that was what they most needed. When such children were interrogated, the answer would be: We are going back to our own chapel, to our own religion when the stirabout times are over ... or the potatoes come again."



Recalling the Colony

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IMPRINT OF HISTORY

THE story of the Colony unfolds, through contemporary pictures of Dugort, the hub of the mission's life, as well as through drawings of Edward Nangle and his nemesis the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam, John McHale, and through windswept images of the graveyard and the stone gables of the Deserted Village.

Also part of the web of this story are the origins of Bunacurry Franciscan Monastery and Holy Trinity Church on Inishbiggle, the harbour at Bulls-mouth and the ruin of the infamous Captain Boycott's house overlooking the ocean at Keem. Boycott had rented 2,000 acres from an Achill Mission tenant, after it purchased most of the island.

In her closing observations, Patricia Byrne writes: "I climb Slievemore for the first time making my way along the mountain ridge in an east-west direction on a clear summer's day. The expanse of Achill Island is visible from the summit. I feel the imprint of history beneath my feet: a memorial to those who lived and died on these mountain slopes and on this island: the ghost of those who inhabited these places, whose

flesh and bones sank into this earth. A mountain that holds its skeletons close."

THE AUTHORS AND ARTISTS

A native of Co Mayo, Patricia Byrne is a writer and independent researcher, who now lives in Limerick. Her book, 'The Preacher and the Prelate - the Achill Mission Colony and the Battle for souls in Famine Ireland' is published by Merrion Press.

Francis Van Maele and Antic-Ham, aka Franticham, run Redfoxpress in Dugort. They use a broad range of techniques for their artists books and also collaborate with artists and authors to print limited hand-printed editions of books.

For more information, see patriciabyrneauthor.com and redfoxpress.com.

"They were afraid hunger would tempt them to take the soup so they decided to go up to the top of the hill and die there before they would put themselves in the way of temptation. And they went up and they died."

— From island folklore

Russian roulette

Pathways into Russia's tumultuous past

BRÍD CONROY



A TRAGEDY is an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress. My first book choice this week, 'A People's Tragedy', by Orlando Figes, published by Bodley Head, recounts the events of 1917/8 in Russia when the workers and soldiers began to rise up against the Tzar and his government of the time.

Figes starts off with Russia pre World War I, when the Tzar thought he could control and micro-manage every aspect of Russian life. For him it was perfectly acceptable, to live in absolute splendour, while the peasants and workers lived in abject poverty. It was perfectly acceptable to send those same workers and soldiers to the slaughter, when World War I broke out. But the people had had enough and began to rebel.

The book continues to divulge in great detail, the day-to-day changes in St Petersburg as events began to unfold in 1917. The Russian army reverting to mutiny and the Tzar realising his days were numbered, tried to do too little too late by handing over state power to a provisional government, the Duma (Russian Parliament).

At the same time, grassroots community assemblies were being formed called Soviets. These were dominated by soldiers and urban industrial proletariats. Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks were the strongest of these Soviets. They campaigned for an end to the war while the parliament chose



to continue to fight the Germans.

We realise the shocking truth of how it could have been so different if the Parliament had reformed quicker, or not continued the war. Then Lenin and the Bolsheviks may never have seized control. Russia way back in 1917 had the beginnings of a democracy.

However, the Russian people were in a sense betrayed, by handing over power to another regime which would inflict the 'Red Terror' and civil war on those self same peasants, workers and soldiers.

Figes posits that the 'The Ghosts of 1917 have not been laid to rest', and I can't help but agree as I call to mind images of the palaces constructed by Vladimir Putin, the current President of Russia....

'The Borodino Field', by Robert Kershaw, published by The History Press tells the story of two other invasions on Russia - Napoleon and his Grande Armee in 1812 and Hitler and his Nazis in 1941. What is so great about this book is the detail surround-

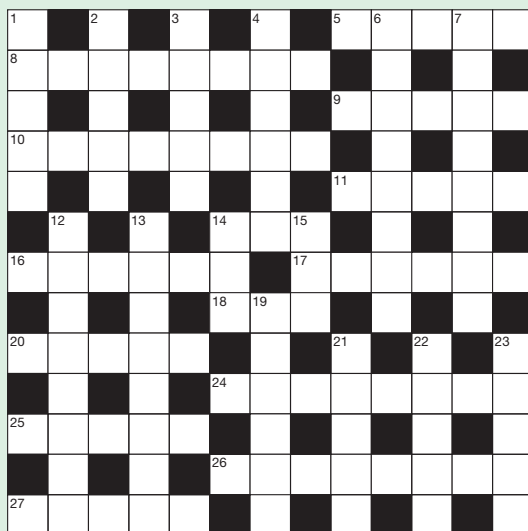
ing the Borodino Field, where the Russians on both occasions, realising that all would be lost if the armies were to succeed past Borodino, put up a heroic defence of the Motherland, with Moscow being just a few short miles away.

The book alternates between time-frames and battles and details how the same obstacles impeded the two invasions. Both armies were miles from their lines of supply due to the vastness of Russia. The winter of course was on the side of the Russians. The utter pointlessness of both wars is laid out. Napoleon's 135,000 marching troops were no match for the Russians on their home territory. The Nazis had planes but no fields to land them in.

However, if the Bolsheviks had not existed and Hitler had not hated the Bolsheviks, Europe could be a very different place today.

Bríd Conroy and her husband Neil Paul run Tertulia - A Bookshop Like No Other at The Quay, Westport.

CROSSWORD No. 1665



Across:

- 5 This clue hurts (5)
8 Withdraws (8)
9 Outwit (5)
10 French wine region and colour (8)
11 See-through, sheer (5)
14 Jones index on the N.Y. Stock Exchange (3)
16 Saint Helier's island keeps one warm (6)
17 Overjoyed (6)
18 Woolly mummy (3)
20 At arm's length (5)
24 Cornache can be trespass (8)
25 Give one's permission for (5)
26 Repentant (8)
27 Romantic rendezvous (5)

Down:

- 1 Backhander, oil the palm (5)
2 Bare, total (5)
3 Thigh bone (5)
4 Artist's workshop (6)
6 Welsh town keeps one warm

- (8)
7 Handicap, impede (8)
12 Acknowledger (8)
13 Flabbergasts (8)
14 Colour (3)
15 Tiny (3)
19 Separate the chaff from the grain (6)
21 Common (5)
22 Dickens' "receiver of stolen goods" (5)
23 Twitter (5)

ANSWERS TO 1664:

Across: 1 Recede, 4 Bridge, 7 Boring, 8 Israel, 9 Craft, 12 Essay, 13 Homer, 14 Noose, 15 Bambi, 17 Inure, 20 Cater, 23 Nuance, 24 Malawi, 25 Myopia, 26 Secede.
Down: 1 Rebuke, 2 Curious, 3 Eiger, 4 Brief, 5 Diadem, 6 Éclair, Cynic, 10 Afoot, 11 Their, 15 Birnam, 16 Monaco, 18 Urbane, 19 Expire, 21 Arena, 22 Emmys.

SCRIBBLE BOX

