

Publishing and The Coast of Leitrim

Bláithín Gallagher chats to Fergus Mulligan author, publisher and adjudicator

FERGUS MULLIGAN HAS been a committed supporter of the *Leitrim Guardian* down through the years, adjudicating for our literary awards without hesitation. This is a big task and involves reading some of the many manuscripts that are submitted each year, comprising works of fiction, fact and poetry.

BG: Fergus we really appreciate your contribution to our publication. On this our 50th issue I guess it is time we allowed our readers find out a little more about you! Tell me a little about your work.

FM: I'm a publisher based in Dublin and for the past 20 years my daily commute to work takes about 15 seconds. My office is built onto the house and looks onto the garden through large plate glass windows. FMComms is a specialist publisher, mainly non-fiction, academic books, journals, website text and indexes. It's deliberately small, a one person show, I buy in design and print as needed, indirectly employing two people.

BG: You are a Leitrim man and like many have settled elsewhere. I know this can be a loaded question especially when considered philosophically! Where are you from and has this influenced where you are now in life?

FM: I was born in Mohill just behind the

Titanic bench and books featured a lot when we were growing up in Ballinamore. My mother, May Logan, was a voracious reader. I think she'd be pleased that the site of her family home is now the County Library. Still more that when we published *Warts and All*, a history of the Logans written by her brother, Pat Logan, we launched it in the Library on the same spot with a large international gathering of Logans.

BG: Your company, FM Communications has published a variety of books crossing various subjects, mainly non-fiction I believe. I am certain our readers would love to hear a little more about some of your publications.

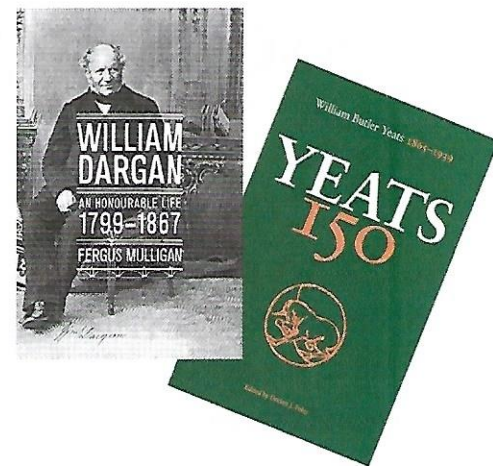
FM: We publish a broad range of material: annual College journals, newsletters, a large format hardback group memoir called *Circle of Friends* and texts for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization on topics like climate change, water scarcity and nutrition in developing countries.

BG: You don't just publish books and documents, you also write articles and other work?

FM: Book reviews and historical articles for various journals are part of my work and I give regular talks to historical societies all over the country. So a mixed bunch of projects, the way I like it and I enjoy what I do.

BG: Are there any particular challenges in publishing non-fiction that you encounter in your work?

FM: Indexes are a mystery to many people but every non-fiction book is the better for having one. An entry such as "Leitrim" followed by 30 page numbers is useless: sub-entries are essential. Compiling a good index is curiously satisfying, one of the best I've done and the most demanding was the index to a 650 page book on Yeats. It ran to 25 pages.



BG: On top of the day job you are also an author of several books, and you organise an annual creative writing retreat. You have several publications to your name. Does this personal writing energize or exhaust you? How long on average does it take you to write a book?

FM: Writing is also very satisfying, covering areas like travel, transport and military history, biography, architecture. Books take years to write, my latest being on Carlow engineer William Dargan who built many Irish railways.

BG: What does your family think of your writing?

FM: I've written my memoirs but not for publication, they're for my three now adult children, so that when I die they'll find answers to some of the questions they wish they'd asked, questions I'd like to have asked my own parents. I called it *The Coast of Leitrim* because of course many people outside the county are blissfully unaware we have a coastline.

BG: Yes, not only are we are proud of our lovely coastline here in Leitrim we are proud of our brothers and sisters, sons and daughter, the many who have left our beautiful county to find fruition and fortune elsewhere. Thank you Fergus for your contribution to the *Leitrim Guardian* over the years and we wish you every continued success.

To find out more, go to www.publishing.ie

