

Reflecting on post-Famine history times

■ Oughterard conference discusses impact of famine and emigration on Connemara

AN imaginative conference that looks at the impact of emigration on Connemara in the aftermath of the Great Famine, will take place in Oughterard this weekend.

Conamara: Emigration & Landscape will run for three days at the village's newly restored Courthouse, and will feature talks, tours and exhibitions from today (Thursday) to Saturday.

"This important collaboration of the cultural communities in Oughterard will celebrate our newly restored public amenity; the Courthouse," explained one of the organizers, David Collins.

"The conference itself will highlight the Tuke Assisted Emigration of the 1860s and speakers will add context to the period and illustrate the lasting effects on Conamara," he added.

Those sharing their knowledge and insights include Dr Gerard Moran, who will speak on the Tuke-assisted emigration schemes from Oughterard in the 1880s in a talk entitled From Poverty to Posterity.

Dr Regina Donlon's 'I ain't sorry for leaving Ireland' is a variation on the same theme, dealing with the legacy of Tuke's scheme from 1880-1930.

And Dr Ciara Breathnach will speak on the Congested Districts Board: photography, poverty and development.

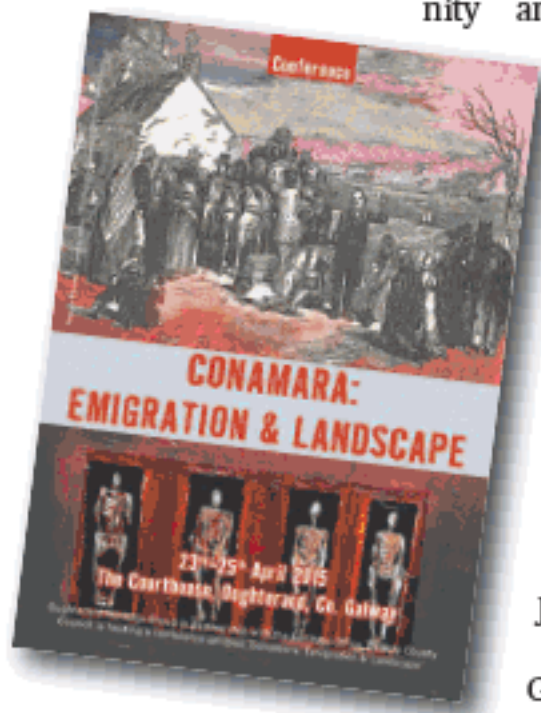
Acclaimed archaeologist Michael Gibbons will lead a very special tour entitled Connemara's Lost 18th & 19th Centuries Landscapes.

The trip will start at the Courthouse in Oughterard and take the visitor through the landscape of Leam, Maam Cross and will include a visit to the Maam Valley which is draped with the remains of a lost 19th century

landscape.

Participants will have the opportunity to view a ruined cashel and mass rock. Further on there will be a stop at a lonely children's burial ground on the shores of Killary Harbour, near Ashleagh waterfall.

There will be a stop in Leenane with an opportunity



to view the old village above the hotel and also a viewing spot showing where the Atlantic fleet was anchored in 1907. Then the trip will head west to Little Killary and visit Salrock cemetery with its holy well and there will be a short walk along the most dramatic relief road built in Ireland.

There will be an opportunity to view a 4,000 year old forest at the roadside and then travel west to the Blake Estate, passing the home of the Wilde Family. The group will also see Renvyle Castle and House where Yeats stayed on his honeymoon.

A light picnic lunch will be provided - but you should bring rain gear and suitable walking shoes. Registration is from 9.30am to 10.30am at the Courthouse and the tour returns around 5.30pm.

'M'ait dhúchais - My Native

Place' is an exhibition responding to the theme of emigration and the landscape of Conamara presented by uachtarARTS and friends which will open today (Thursday) at 8pm and will continue until May 16.

The exhibition at the Courthouse is in collaboration with the Oughterard Heritage Group and the Heritage Office at Galway County Council.

Artists include Leah Beggs, Renske Boef, Brian Bourke, Denis Farrell, Kathleen Furey, Doc Gilbert, Margaret Irwin West, Dolores Lyne, Jay Murphy, Gearoid MacGabhann, Rosie McGurran, Patricia McQuinn, Colette NicAodha, Catherine O'Leinachain, Cormac O'Neill, Siobhan Potter, Chris Mayhew, Pádraic Reaney, Joan Sugrue, Jess Walsh & Tara Walsh.

The Oughterard Writers Group present 'Same Moon: Voices on the theme of Emigration' this Friday from 8pm to 9pm at the Courthouse. This free event is an important creative contribution from Oughterard Writers Group in response to the theme of emigration using words, drama and song.

Among those contributing will be Helena Burke, John Cronin, Kathleen Furey, Nicola Geddes, Margaret Larminie, Chris Mayhew, Matt Molloy, Pete Mullineaux, Jack McCann, Elizabeth Power, Louise Felton, Nella Ní Neachtain and Jess Walsh.

The full conference fee of €20 includes the Thursday evening launch and reception, Friday lectures, coffee and lunch, and the Saturday bus trip with picnic lunch - or you can participate in the individual events as desired.

Email ouughterardheritage@gmail.com or phone 085 165 7496.