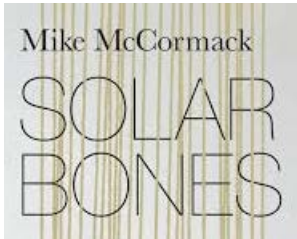


A YEAR OF READS AT MAYO COUNTY LIBRARY - 2016

Here it is, the list you've all been waiting for! Mayo County Library's Books of the Year, as nominated by our panel of voracious readers, who sacrifice so much of their leisure time for you, the curious reader. Our usual, eclectic mix of fiction and non-fiction should definitely have something for everyone...

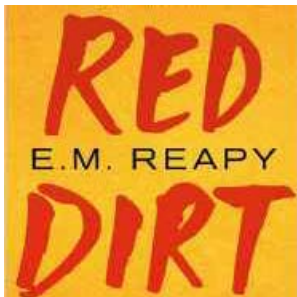


***Solar Bones* by Mike McCormack**

If you like to finish a book on a chapter, you won't be thanking Louisburgh man Mike McCormack for the unusual stylistic twist in his latest novel – there isn't a full stop to be found throughout the book. Instead, McCormack uses frequent indentations to signal a change of topic. It's in keeping with the stream of consciousness of the book, however, as we are introduced to the inner thoughts and ruminations of Marcus Conway, a resident of Louisburgh, engineer with Mayo County Council, father of two, and husband of teacher Mairead. *Solar Bones* is a humdinger of a read – it nips in and out of Mayo terrain, familiar to us and yet wholly universal. It's the topography of a life rather than a county, but the local touch adds to the experience. This was one of Castlebar Library Book Clubs two five-star books this year, and we join them in awarding it the Mayo County Library Fiction Pick of 2016.

***Born To Run* by Bruce Springsteen**

Over the past seven years, Bruce Springsteen has privately devoted himself to writing the story of his life, bringing to these pages the same honesty, humour and originality found in his songs. He describes growing up Catholic in New Jersey, his relentless drive to become a musician, his early days as a bar band king, and the rise of the E Street Band. With disarming candour, he also tells for the first time the story of the personal struggles that inspired his best work. Rarely has a performer told his own story with such force and sweep, and indeed wisdom.



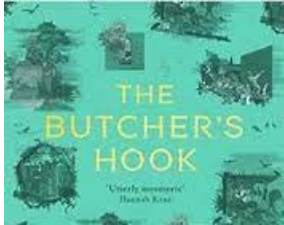
***Red Dirt* by EM Reapy**

A group of young Irish migrants leave a man for dead on an outback road in Australia. They barely know him; no-one will miss him in their world of hostels, wild nights on cheap wine and grinding work on isolated farms. In this powerful novel about the discovery of responsibility, three young people flee the collapse of their country's economy. In the heat and endless spaces of Australia they try to escape their past, but impulsive cruelty, shame and guilt drag them down, and it is easy to make terrible choices. A gritty and riveting read by local woman Elizabeth Reapy.

***When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi**

At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade's training as a neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. One day he was a doctor treating the dying, the next he was a patient struggling to live. This book chronicles his transformation from a medical student into a neurosurgeon working in the core of human

identity – the brain – and finally into a patient and a new father. What makes life worth living in the face of death? What does it mean to have a child as your own life fades away? *When Breath Becomes Air* is a life-affirming reflection on facing our mortality and on the relationship between doctor and patient, from a gifted writer who became both.

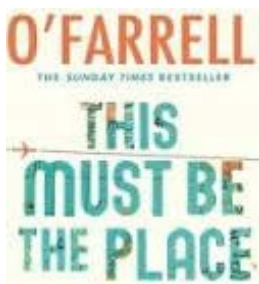


***The Butcher's Hook* by Janet Ellis**

Nineteen-year-old Anne Jaccob is quite unlike most other heroines, particularly those of her time. It's Georgian London, the summer of 1763, and Anne feels as though she has been struck by lightning, having just clapped eyes on the butcher's apprentice for the first time. Her mother is unwell after childbirth, and her father distracted by his many business interests, which leaves Anne free to roam the streets of London. She duly does so in search of young Fub, the boy whose face she can't forget, and the two are soon trapped in a Romeo and Juliet-type situation, with neither able to come clean to their families about their burgeoning romance. But if Fub accepts his lot in life, Anne is a lot more determined, and she will not renounce her love so easily. How she goes about getting her own way is the surprising heart of the book, but far be it from us to spoil any surprises....

***The Gene* by Siddhartha Mukherjee.**

This is the story of one of the most powerful and dangerous ideas in our history, from bestselling, prize-winning author Siddhartha Mukherjee. Spanning the globe and several centuries, *The Gene* is the story of the quest to decipher the master-code that makes and defines humans, and that governs our form and function. But woven through *The Gene* is also an intimate history – the story of Mukherjee's own family and its recurring pattern of mental illness, reminding us that genetics is vitally relevant to everyday lives. These concerns reverberate even more urgently today as we learn to “read” and “write” the human genome – unleashing the potential to change the fates and identities of our children. Majestic in its ambition, and unflinching in its honesty, *The Gene* gives us a definitive account of the fundamental unit of heredity – and a vision of both humanity's past and future.



***This Must Be the Place* by Maggie O'Farrell**

Daniel O'Sullivan isn't a man who likes to make life easy for himself. But then again, which of us has truly mastered that feat? He is a born and bred New Yorker, transplanted to the wilds of Donegal, where he lives with his eccentric French wife (a former film star) and their young children. Claudette is fiercely protective of the family's privacy, to the extent that she's not afraid to shoot at anyone who even approaches their long, abundantly-gated driveway. When Daniel hears shocking news of a woman he knew very well some twenty years previously, he can't help but take off to find out what happened to her. O'Farrell's ability to create compelling characters is as strong as ever in this very enjoyable read.

***Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* by Carlo Rovelli**

Everything you need to know about modern physics, the universe and our place in the world in seven enlightening lessons. These lessons guide us, with simplicity and clarity, through the scientific revolution that shook physics in the twentieth century and still continues to shake us today. In this mind-bending introduction to modern physics, Carlo Rovelli explains Einstein's theory of general relativity, quantum mechanics, black holes, the complex architecture of the

universe, elementary particles, gravity, and the nature of the mind. Vividly, intelligent and entertaining, this phenomenal bestseller is Benedict Cumberbatch's favourite book!

Humans of Dublin by Peter Varga

A little over two years ago, Peter Varga began a photo project that would change the course of his life. Inspired by the success of similar projects internationally, he began to walk the streets of Dublin, interviewing and photographing those he met along the way, and worked to uncover the powerful stories hiding in plain sight. The result is a remarkable collection of character studies, which captures the vibrancy and diversity of Dublin life. From tales of inspiration and joy to those of heartbreak and loss, all of human life is here in a beautifully produced hardback volume. Dublin will never look the same to you again.



***Everyone Brave is Forgiven* by Chris Cleave**

Loosely inspired by the wartime experiences of Cleave's grandparents, *Everyone Brave is Forgiven* falls firmly in the unputdownable category of novel. Despite her well-to-do background, Mary North cannot wait to enlist at the War Office but she is somewhat disheartened to learn that she will serve as a teacher for children who remained in London during the Blitz. She had envisaged a more glamorous existence as a spy or something equally exciting, but soon discovers that she enjoys a special rapport with the children. Beg, borrow or buy a copy – do what you have to in order to read this beautiful book.

I Read the News Today, Oh Boy by Paul Howard

Few people rode the popular wave of the sixties quite like Tara Browne. One of Swinging London's most popular faces, he lived fast, died young and was immortalized forever in the opening lines of 'A Day in the Life' by The Beatles. But who knew that John Lennon's subject was a Claremorris man? Paul Howard has pieced together the extraordinary story of the young Irishman who epitomized the spirit of the times: racing car driver, Vogue model, friend of The Rolling Stones, style icon, son of a peer, heir to a Guinness fortune and the man who turned Paul McCartney on to LSD. No one embodied the ephemeral promise of London's sixties better than Tara Browne, a child born into Ireland's dwindling aristocracy, who spent his early years in an ancient castle in County Mayo.



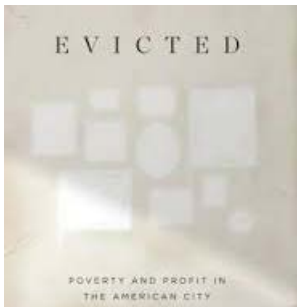
***Sweetland* by Michael Crummey**

Sweetland could easily be set in Ireland, but instead it refers to a fictional tiny town on the shore of a remote Canadian island. This community of Newfoundlanders is close-knit but separate, but a wedge is driven between them when the mainland government offers each islander a generous resettlement package – as long as everyone packs up and leaves. Moses Sweetland, the stubborn old git whose ancestors founded the village, is the last-standing refusenik and he has no intention of leaving his life-long home. His nearest neighbours, sons of the only woman he ever loved, warn him that he risks being driven out if he doesn't acquiesce. But Sweetland is happy to stay with his memories, and the autistic son of his only niece is also determined to stay on the island. A captivating story.

Powering the West by Christy Loftus and James Laffey

Electricity generation at Bellacorick ceased in 2005. On October 14, 2007 over 3,000 people turned up to see the gigantic tower come crashing to the ground. The demolition brought to

an end the tallest structure in Mayo, an iconic feature on the Erris landscape, and a structure that stood for progress and prosperity. The structure is gone but the story lives on within the covers of this splendid 400-page book in a fascinating mix of personal stories and wonderful images. It tells the story of the men who tamed the “unmanageable” bogs of Erris and created huge employment in one of the worst unemployment blackspots in the country. The winner of the *Local History Book of The Year* at the Listowel Writers Festival, this is a vivid record of the political machinations and intrigue that went on in Mayo County Council and in government as the battle was fought to drain the bogs to generate electricity in Mayo.



Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city by Matthew Desmond

From abandoned slums to shelters, eviction courts to ghettos, Matthew Desmond spent years living with and recording the stories of those struggling to survive - yet who won't give up. A work of love, care and humanity, *Evicted* reminds us why, without a home, nothing else is possible. And this is the twenty-first century where fewer and fewer people can afford a simple roof over their head! This is an extraordinary and crucial piece of work. Please read it.

Forever Young: The Story of Adrian Doherty, Football's Lost Genius by Oliver Kay

Described as “Bob Dylan in a No 7 shirt”, Adrian Doherty was a young footballer of extraordinary talent. He came into the Manchester United “Class of 92” alongside such household names as Giggs, Beckham and Scholes. But while the others were at training, Doherty was reading theology and French existentialism and writing songs and poems. Then, when he had the world at his feet, he died tragically the day before his 27th birthday. This football book is about something even more important than the “beautiful game”; it is a story of the human spirit. The sports book of the year.

***Prosperity Drive* by Mary Morrissy**

Mary Morrissy’s newest short story collection reads more like a novel, the stories being linked to the same suburban Dublin street. The characters wander in and out of each other’s stories just as their paths would cross on the street, and we are frequently updated as to a character’s progress through the voice of another. Elderly isolation, abuse, infidelity, discrimination and childhood mortality are just some of the upsetting themes throughout the stories, but Morrissy’s deft touch ensures that the writing never gets bogged down in misery. Her turn of phrase is beautiful, and her characters are as real life as those we pass in the street every day. Even the children’s hospital that looms over Prosperity Drive is drawn into the action, in a very poignant story about a junior doctor and her difficulty in imparting negative news to parents.



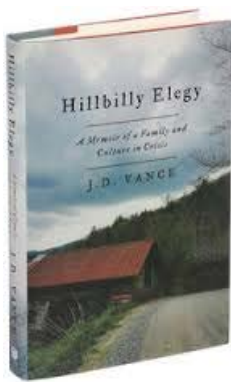
The Little Book of Sham by Keith Martin

This charming and witty little book is a parody of the self-help volumes that line the shelves of bookshops today. Written by librarian and former Town Councillor, Martin, it consists of an amusing collection of jocularly adapted “inspirational” and “motivational” sayings to inspire our lives. Examples: “If you dance

like no one is watching and sing like no one is listening, you probably live alone.” “There are two types of people in the world. You and them.” A lovely book to dip into when the madness of Christmas becomes too much.

***The Trouble With Goats and Sheep* by Joanna Cannon**

Grace Bennett is ten years old and she is overflowing with questions. But the kind of questions she is asking are the very ones nobody wants to answer. It's the summer of 1976, during the middle of a blistering heat wave, and Grace wants to know why her neighbour Mrs. Creasy has disappeared, and why another neighbour Walter Bishop is *persona non grata* on The Avenue. But her best friend Tilly doesn't have any answers, and Grace's parents seem to speak in riddles. This is a beautifully-written coming-of-age story, told through the eyes of a child who knows more than she understands, amidst a simmering pot of tension. There is a wonderful scene involving the arrival of the street's first Indian family, and Grace's embarrassment at her parents' cluelessness adds a nicely comic touch.



Hillbilly Elegy by JD Vance

A book that may explain how Trump won the US Presidential election, this is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis - that of white working-class. It tells the story of the decline of Vance's family who grew up in a poor Rust Belt town in Ohio. The decline of this group has been reported on with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. A deeply moving memoir with its share of humour and vividly colourful figures, *Hillbilly Elegy* is the story of how “upward mobility” really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation that holds much relevance for Europe and indeed Ireland.

***Before the Fall* by Noah Hawley**

This book should come with a stickered health warning that it's not – at any cost – to be read while travelling on a plane. But then again, few of us will ever travel on a luxury private jet, so maybe it's safe enough for Ryanair. Scott Burroughs is your average broke artist, and very definitely not your average private jet passenger. But when he's offered a seat on the Bateman family's trip from Martha's Vineyard to New York, he gratefully accepts. Less than twenty minutes after takeoff, the plane plummets into the ocean, with just two survivors – Burroughs and the youngest Bateman child, JJ. Was this a terrorist strike against David Bateman? After all, he does run a TV news channel that doesn't shy from controversy. Or was somebody else on the plane being targeted for various misdemeanours? The sense of intrigue bubbles slowly through the novel, as the stories of the dead passengers are revealed one by one.