

**“BY ENDURANCE
WE CONQUER”**

A Course in Creative Writing
with **Mary Russell**

the arts
council
an chomhairle
ealaíon
50+



AUTUMN 2002

KILDARE LIBRARY AND ARTS SERVICE

WRITERS WORKSHOPS

Sir Ernest Shackleton the great polar explorer was born at Killea House, Athy, Co. Kildare in 1874. Shackleton was renowned for his courage, extraordinary leadership skills and his contribution to geographical discovery during the era of Antarctic exploration in the early years of the 20th century.

The *Endurance* expedition 1914-1916 has become one of the greatest epics of human survival, while Shackleton has become famous for his triumphs of honesty and humanitarianism.

Writer **Mary Russell's** approach to travel and exploration reflects the philosophy of Shackleton. Like Shackleton, her courage and interpersonal skills have seen her through many difficult situations. Mary Russell is a serious traveller. She has cycled through Syria, dog sledged through the Finnish Arctic and scrambled on her hands and knees across the Sahara. Like Shackleton, Russell's physical journeys have been immense, but fundamentally, the inner journey interests her most.

To celebrate County Kildare's association with Shackleton, and to coincide with the Ernest Shackleton Autumn School, **Kildare Library and Arts Service** will host a series of writer's workshops countywide in September/ October 2002. The workshops, facilitated by Mary Russell will examine themes of **travel, exploration and endurance**.

WORKSHOP Director

Mary Russell was born in Dublin and studied Arts at University College Dublin. She soon began writing for The Irish Times. Her career in travel writing escalated with a four-part series on solo women travellers for the Guardian Newspaper. She followed this with a book about women travellers and explorer called **The Blessings Of A Good Thick Skirt**.

In 1981, Mary travelled to Lesotho, the first of many such journeys. Later, Mary cycled through France, from Le Harve to Marseilles. She caught a ship to Algiers, continuing to the Sahara Desert where she spent time with the Saharawi: a desert people displaced by the invasion of their country by Morocco. Other journeys followed; to the Arctic, South Africa, Hungary and the Eastern Caribbean.

In 1998, Mary was invited to contribute to Penguin's **Amazonian**, a collection of new travel writing, by women. Following on from this, Irish publishing company, Town House commissioned her to write a travel book, which looks, not only at the places she has so far visited, but also at her reasons for going to these places. The Arab world, with all of its complexities continues to entice Mary, with more recent travels taking her to Israel, Syria and Iraq.

Journeys of a Lifetime by Mary Russell was published in June 2002. According to The Irish Times the book is 'vivid, self-deprecating and often hilarious'.

DAY 1

- 10.00am – 10.30am:** Registration
- 10.30am – 11.30am:** What is travel for? To fulfill a dream, to get a rush of adrenaline, to stare at strange faces and places. What is travel writing for? Whose interest does it serve – the writer, the subject, the reader? Do travel writers have responsibilities?
- 11.30am – 12.00 noon:** Break
- 12.00 noon – 1.00pm:** What is 'good' travel writing? Discussion of examples offered by facilitator with participants offering their own favourite examples.
- 13.00pm – 14.00pm:** Lunch
- 14.00pm – 15.00pm:** Getting down to it: The nitty gritty of travel writing. Keeping a diary, note-taking, composition, research, accuracy.
- 15.00pm – 16.00pm:** Discussion: **"Those who rush across the seas change the skies, not their minds"** Cultural baggage ... what we take with us, what we bring back.
- 16.00pm – 16.30pm:** Tea. Close of workshop.

DAY 2

- 10.30am – 11.30am:** Ways of seeing. Do men and women see things differently? Discussion on Ella Maillart and Peter Fleming's books about the same journey, based on photocopied examples provided by the facilitator.
Them and Us: Discussion on two views of Ireland from Eric Newby and Robert Robertson.

- 11.30am – 12.00 noon:** Break
- 12.00 noon – 13.00pm:** Participants offer their own work.
- 13.00pm – 14.00pm:** Lunch
- 14.00pm – 15.00pm:** Exploration and endurance. Three ways of toughing it: Dervla Murphy, Stanley Stewart, Christina Dodwell.
- 15.00pm – 16.00pm:** **Going for it!** Participants are invited to devise a home-based (i.e. local) journey of endurance and exploration, travelling either solo or in pairs. This can be a challenging hill walk, a night's camping, a bike ride, a horse ride, a torchlight trek etc. A day without food! Preparing for this: research, map, safety, cost. The role of emotions. The value of fear. **Does it matter if the objective is not achieved?** To find out, read Eric Newby's **'A Short Walk in the Hindu Kish'**

DAY 3

- 19.30 pm – 20.30pm:** **Celebrating survival.** Participants read their accounts.
- 20.30pm – 21.00:** Break
- 21.00pm – 22.00pm:** Discussion on the challenges, the problems encountered, the solutions found. Where do we go from here? **Onwards to the great adventure**

Work produced during the writer's workshops will be presented in Athy Library on Thursday 24th October at 8pm as part of the programme for the Ernest Shackleton Autumn School.



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CELBRIDGE LIBRARY

DAY 1 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sat. 21st September

DAY 2 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sun. 22nd September

DAY 3 7.30pm – 10.00pm
Thurs. 26th September

MAYNOOTH LIBRARY

DAY 1 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sat. 28th September

DAY 2 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sun. 29th September

DAY 3 7.30pm – 10.00pm
Thurs. 3rd October

NAAS LIBRARY

DAY 1 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sat. 5th October

DAY 2 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sun. 6th October

DAY 3 7.30pm – 10.00pm
Thurs. 10th October

NEWBRIDGE LIBRARY

DAY 1 10.00 am – 16.30pm
Sat. 12th October

DAY 2 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sun. 13th October

DAY 3 7.30pm – 10.00pm
Thurs. 17th October

ATHY LIBRARY

DAY 1 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sat. 19th October

DAY 2 10.00am – 16.30pm
Sun. 20th October

DAY 3 7.30pm – 10.00pm
Tues. 22nd October

BOOKING FORM

Course fees are €40.00. This price includes workshop fees, lunches and refreshments. These fees are non-refundable.

Please return this form with cheque or postal order for €40.00, made payable to Kildare County Council, to:
Lucina Russell, Kildare County Arts Officer, Riverbank, Main Street, Newbridge, Co. Kildare

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

E MAIL: _____

