



International Literature Festival Dublin

Conair Filíochta: Both Sides of the Liffey - Bilingual Self-Guided Poetry Trail

curated by Ciara Ní É for the International Literature Festival Dublin 2021.

[More Event Info](#)

Ciara Ní É:

Dia dhuit agus fáilte go dtí Conair Filíochta an International Literature Festival Dublin fiche fiche haon. Is mise Ciara Ní É, file, agus léiritheoir na n-imeachtaí Gaeilge ag an ILF i mbliana, agus do bhean an tí don siúlóid filíochta dhátheangach seo timpeall Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath.

Hello and welcome to the International Literature Festival Dublin's Conair Filíochta / Poetry Trail twenty twenty one. I'm Ciara Ní É, a poet and the curator of the Irish Language events for this year's festival and I am delighted to be your host for this bilingual poetic ramble around Dublin City.

Déan do bhealach féin tríd an gconair seo, agus cloisfidh tú dánta ó chúigear scríbhneoirí a bhfuil guth láidir acu i bhfilíocht chomhaimseartha na Gaeilge – Aifric Mac Aodha, Paddy Bushe, Áine Ní Ghlinn, Mícheál Ó Ruairc, agus Seosamh Ó Murchú.

This self guided audio trail features recited poems at special locations by five exciting voices in contemporary Irish poetry – Aifric Mac Aodha, Paddy Bushe, Áine Ní Ghlinn, Mícheál Ó Ruairc, and Seosamh Ó Murchú.

Roghnaigh mé gach stad ar an gconair seo go cúramach, le nascadh le téamaí éagsúla na ndánta, mar sin oscail do shúile agus féach thart agus tú ag éisteacht le guthanna na bhfilí.

I chose the location of each stop on this trail carefully to link in with the themes of the various poems, so open your eyes and soak it all in as you listen to the poet's voices.

Taistealóidh tú trí sheanscéalta agus stair na hÉireann, go Baile Átha Cliath an lae inniu, agus tá lúchair orm go gcloisfidh sibh na dánta i dteanga dhúchais na cathrach, chomh maith leis an mBéarla.

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You will travel through Irish mythology and history, to modern day Dublin, and it gives me great pleasure to offer you the opportunity to hear these poems in the city's native language, as well as English.

2km ar fhad atá an Chonair. Nuair a chloiseann tú an ceol tar éis na ndánta, brú an cnaipe sosa agus déan do bhéalach go dtí an chéad stad eile. *The route covers approximately 2km. Pause after each poem when you hear the music, and make your way to the next stop.*

STOP 1 Paddy Bushe - Chariot of Life statue

Ciara Ní É:

Fáilte go dtí stad uimhir a haon, ag an dealbh agus fuarán *Chariot of Life* leis an dealbhóir Oisín Kelly. Paddy Bushe an chéad fhile a cloisfimid, lena dhán 'Céimeanna Uisce'.

Welcome to the stop number one, opposite the Chariot of Life sculpture and fountain by sculptor Oisín Kelly. Paddy Bushe is our first poet up, with his poem 'Water Steps'.

Paddy Bushe:

Scríobhas an dán "Céimeanna Uisce" mar saghas comrádaí filíochta do phíosa dealbhadóireachta le Holger Lönze. Píosa álainn é seo atá curtha in airde le déanaí i gCearnóg Fitzwilliam. Athnuachan atá an ar fhuarán a bhí sa gháirdín sin ar feadh i bhfad ach a bhí titithe as a chéile, seachas an bonn de chloch eibhear a bhí leis. Dhear Holger píosa cré umha *repoussé*, tuairim is méadar ar airde, le duilleoga cosúil le sraith leathanaigh agus an t-uisce ag sní ó leathanach go leathanach. Is é traidisiún intleachtúil agus liteartha na cathrach, go háirithe an chuid sin den gcathair, ba inspioráid don dtogra. Tá súil agam nach fada uainn an lá go mbeidh an pháirc i gCearnóg Fitzwilliam ar oscailt don bpobal i gcoitinne.

I wrote the poem "Water Steps" as a poetic companion piece to a bronze sculpture by Holger Lönze. This is a beautiful work that has recently been erected in Fitzwilliam Square. It is a renewal of a fountain that was in that garden for many years, but had fallen into ruin apart from a granite base. On that granite base, Holger sculpted a piece in repoussé bronze, about a metre in height, with sheets like a series of pages, and water now flows from sheet to sheet. The inspiration for the piece was the intellectual and literary tradition of the city,

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especially of that area. I hope that the plans to open the square to the public soon come to fruition.

Maidir leis an dán féin, bhuail sé liom, nuair a chonac an píosa dealbhadóireachta, go raibh sé cosúil freisin le céimeanna san uisce, cosúil, abair, le cora, nó *weir*, in abhainn. Chuir seo an bradán feasa i gcuimhne dom, agus an ghaois a ceanglaíodh leis siúd. Chuimhníos freisin ar an dtuairim a luaitear le Heraclitus, an feallsúnaí Gréigeach ó 500 bliain roimh Chríost adúirt go bhfuil brí agus bunús na beatha ag síor athrú. Agus dúirt sé, más fíor, nach féidir leis an duine céanna céim a thógaint isteach san abhainn chéanna dhá lá i ndiaidh a chéile, mar go bhfuil an duine agus an abhainn taréis athrú idir an dá linn.

As regards the poem itself, it struck me, when I saw the sculpture, that it was also like steps in the water, something like a stepped weir in a river. This made me think of the mythological salmon of knowledge, and of the surpassing wisdom associated with it. I was reminded too of the opinion ascribed to Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher from about 500 years BC, that the foundational basis for life is eternal flux and change. He is also reputed to have said that the same person cannot step into the same river two days running, because, in the meantime, both the person and the river will have changed.

Here is the poem, i dtosach as Gaeilge and then in translation:

Céimeanna Uisce

Níl ann don abhainn, adeir an saoi,
Arb í an abhainn chéanna
Ar shiúl tú isteach inti inné,
Ná ní tusa an duine céanna
A shiúil inné isteach san abhainn.
Is sa mhéid seo a shníonn tús
Gan chríoch na saíochta. Sa mhéid seo
A fhásann feasacht an bhradáin,
Ag stracadh le céimeanna na cora,
De shíor ag casadh duilleoga uisce
Le teacht ar fhírinne an scéil, le dul
Go bun agus barr na hiomláine.



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Water Steps

No river, the sage tells us,
Can ever be the same river
You stepped into yesterday,
Nor can you be the same person
Who yesterday stepped into the river.
In this flows the unending
Beginning of wisdom. In this
The salmon grows in knowledge,
Struggling with the stepped weir,
Constantly turning pages of water
To find the truth of what happens, to get
To the beginning and end of the whole thing.

Ciara Ní É:

Déan do bhéalach anois go Droichead Róise Haicéad, siúlóid cúig nóim ar fhad i dtreo na habhann.
You can now start making your way to the Rosie Hackett Bridge, a five minute walk toward the river.

STOP 2 Aifric Mac Aodha - Rosie Hackett Bridge, facing east, out to sea

Ciara Ní É:

Stad a dó, droichead Róise Haicéad. Suí síos anseo más mian leat, agus féach amach i dtreo na farráige agus sibh ag éisteacht le Aifric Mac Aodha ag léamh Eachta chonla, a bhaineann le aistear farráige. Tá tú thar an Life, idir dhá thaobh na cathrach, mar atá Eveline sa dán seo idir dhá chomhairle..
Stop two, the Rosie Hackett Bridge. If you'd like, take a seat looking out towards the sea as you listen to Aifric Mac Aodha's poem The Adventure of Conla, which describes a sea voyage. You are sitting above the Liffey, between the north and the south side, as Eveline in this poem is between two minds.

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Aifric Mac Aodha:

Echtrae Chondlai Brollach

Dhá scéal a théann faoin gcráiceann — *Echtrae Chondlai* agus ‘Eveline’ Joyce. Feic Eveline, ar dtús: í suite ag an bhfuinneog agus an tsráid á feistiú le cuimhní cinn a hóige. Tá cuireadh faighte aici éalú in éineacht le fear farraige agus is í atá idir dhá chomhairle. Eveline, ní imeoidh. Ná bímís soineanta faoin scéal, ach go háirithe, nuair nach aon dualgas iníne a choinníonn siar í ach tarraingt an ghnáthaimh. Ionann scéal d’Eveline agus do Chondlae (.i. leannán, bád is cuireadh chun imeachta), ach amháin seo — go ngéilleann an t-óglach. Is é an cathú dochloíte é, a shamhlú conas a bhí aige féin is ag bean a mheallta, ón uair gur chuireadar chun farraige is gur imíodar leo, dá naomhóg ghloine, ghreanta.

Labhraíonn Condlae

Domsa, níorbh éasca:
ó thosach go deireadh báid liom,
ó dheireadh go tosach,
ba chorrach ar mo dhá chos mé.

Ní cláir adhmaid a bhí fúm,
ach cláir ghloine:
ní bean a bhí faram
ach céad scáil i mo choinne.

Dar liom go raibh an t-uisce féin
á shiúl agam —
is níor le háthas é
ach le teann míshuaimhnis.

Trí aoibhneas a choill sí orm:
lúth ar thalamh,
bean gan aithne,
machaire balbh.



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The Adventure of Condlae

Beginning

Two stories that go to the heart — *The Adventure of Condlae* and Joyce's 'Eveline'. Take Eveline first: she is seated at the window, decking the street out in memories of her youth. She has been invited to elope with a sailor and finds herself in two minds. Eveline won't go. Let's not be naïve about the story though, especially since it's not filial duty that holds her back but the tug of the familiar. Eveline's tale is much like Condlae's (a beloved, a boat, and a chance of escape), except for this — that the young man gives in. It's hard to resist wondering how they fared, he and his curiosity woman, from the moment they raised anchor and took off in her polished, glass boat.

Condlae speaks

It wasn't easy for me:
from stern to prow
and back again,
I was unsteady on my feet.

It wasn't a wooden board under me
but a pane of glass:
it wasn't a woman with me
but a hundred mirrors around me.

You'd think I was walking
on water —
and not with pleasure
but sheer force of nerves.

She robbed me of three delights:
a foot pressing over land,
an unknown woman,
the plain's quiet.

Ciara Ní É:

Anois, lean ort thar an droichead go 27 Sráid an Phiarsaigh.
Now continue over the bridge to 27 Pearse Street.



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STOP 3 Áine Ní Ghlinn - 27 Pearse St. - Pearse and Sons Sculptor

Tá stad a trí sriochte againn, 27 Sráid an Phiarsaigh. Féach suas agus léigh an comhartha thar an doras. Tá tú i do sheasamh os comhair áit bhreithe Phádraig Mhic Piarais, an foirgneamh céanna a mbíodh mar láthair oibre ag a athair. Anois, cloisfidh sibh Áine Ní Ghlinn.

We've reached our third stop, 27 Pearse Street. Look up and read the name above the door. You're standing outside the birthplace of Patrick Pearse, the same building where his father ran his sculpting business. Now you'll hear Áine Ní Ghlinn.

Áine Ní Ghlinn:

An Ród Seo Romhainn

*I Músaem na bPiarsach, Rath Fearnáin tá an dá chupán as ar ól Pádraig Mac Piarais & a dheartháir Willie, cupán tae lena máthair sular fhág siad slán aici Luan Cásca 1916.
Choinnigh an mháthair na cupáin ar an driosúr – agus í ag súil go bhfillfidís beirt.*

Bolaím béal an chupáin as ar ól tú an súimín deireanach tae sular chroch tú leat do mhála droma, sular rug tú orm barróg a mhair tríocha soicind níos faide ná an ghnáthbharróg, sular chaith tú an tsracfhéachaint dheireanach timpeall na cistine, sular oscail tú do bhéal chun rud éigin a rá, sula ndearna tú na focail a thachtadh siar arís, sular leag tú lámh ar mo ghualainn, sular thug tú d'aghaidh ar an ród sin romhat, sular shiúil tú an doras amach.

Samhlaím rian do bheoil ar bhéal an chupáin, rian do mhéire ar an gcluas, scáth do láimhe ar mo ghualainn, scáth d'anála ar mo leiceann. Coinním liom iad, an cupán ar an mbord, scáth do láimhe ar mo ghualainn, boladh na barróige i mo chroí. Coinním liom iad go dtí go dtagann an téacs le rá go bhfuil tú ann, go bhfuil tú slán, go ndéanfaidh tú *skypeáil* amárach. Bolaím an cupán uair amháin eile sula gcuirim sa mhiasniteoir é. Ligim osna is tugaimse m'aghaidh ar an ród seo romham.



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Samhlaím máthair eile, céad bliain ó shin is í ag bolú bhéal an chupáin, á ardú go cúramach lena chinntiú nach nglanann a hordóg siúd rian ordóige a mic, á chur ó lámh go chéile is í ag cuimhneamh ar an mbarróg dheireanach, í ag breathnú isteach sa dríodar is í ag iarraidh na cnámhóga tae a léamh. Fillfidh, Ní fhillfidh. Fillfidh. Ní fhillfidh. Samhlaím í á leagan ar sheilf uachtarach an drisiúir, í ag faire ar an doras, ar an ród fuar folamh. Fillfidh. Ní fhillfidh.

Fillfidh. Ní fhillfidh. Ní fhillfidh. Ní fhillfidh.

The Road Ahead

In the Pearse Museum, St Enda's Park, Rathfarnham, you can see the cups from which Patrick and Willie Pearse drank their final cup tea with their mother and sister

before they left to fight in the 1916 Rising. Their mother, Margaret Pearse, kept those

cups in the hope that her sons would return to drink from them again.

I sniff the rim of the mug from which you drank that last mug of tea before you hitched your rucksack on your back, before you gave me a hug that lasted thirty seconds longer than usual, before you cast one last glance around the kitchen, before you opened your mouth to say something, before you choked back the words and closed it again, before you rested your hand lightly on my shoulder, before you faced the road ahead and walked out that door.

I imagine the taste of your lips on the rim, the print of your fingers on the handle, the ghost of your hand on my shoulder, the whiff of your breath on my cheek. I keep them just as they are, the mug on the table, the ghost of your hand, the scent of your hug. I keep them in my heart. I keep them just as they are until I get the text to say you have arrived and that you'll skype tomorrow. I sniff the cup just one more time before I put it in the dishwasher. I breathe and turn to face the road ahead.

I imagine another mother, over a hundred years ago, sniffing the rim of a tea cup, lifting it carefully to be sure her thumb doesn't blot the print of your thumb, swapping it from hand to hand and remembering that last hug. I imagine her looking into the tea leaves searching for your return. You will



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be back. You won't. You will. You won't. I imagine her placing the cup on the dresser, watching the door, staring at the cold empty road ahead. You will be back. You won't. You will. You won't. You won't. You won't.

Ciara Ní É:

Beidh tú anois ag siúl go dtí Stáisiún na bPiarsach.
You will now be walking to Pearse Station.

STOP 4 Mícheál Ó Ruairc - Pearse St. Dart Station

Ciara Ní É:

Don cheathrú stad ar an gconair tá tú i do sheasamh os comhair Stáisiún na bPiarsach, ainmnithe i ndiaidh Willie agus Pádraig Mac Piarais. Rachaidh tú ar thuras DART anois le Mícheál Ó Ruairc.

For our fourth stop you are standing outside Pearse Station, named after Willie and Patrick Pearse. You're about to take a journey on the DART with Mícheál Ó Ruairc.

Mícheál Ó Ruairc:

Taitníonn an téarma 'conair filíochta' go mór liom. Ciallaíonn 'conair' *pathway* nó *pass*. Cuireann sé 'An Chonair' nó 'The Connor Pass' atá in aice le mo cheantar dúchais i gCiarraí i gcuimhne dom. Is bóthar cúng, dainséarach a cheanglaíonn an Daingean le Bréanainn é. Tá boladh an dainséir uaidh.

Samhlaím go gcaithfidh go mbeidh ceangal idir an fhilíocht agus imeall contúirteach na beatha. Ar an ábhar sin, oireann an íomhá den chonair thar an sliabh go mór, dar liom.

Seasann an cailín scoile sa dán seo do thodhchaí na teanga Gaeilge. I ngan fhios di féin tá sí ag ceiliúradh oidhreacht Phádraig Mhic Piarais agus í ag labhairt amach os ard i nGaeilge agus an traen ag fágáil Stáisiún na bPiarsach. Laoch is ea í im' shúile.

I love the Irish translation for Poetry Trail "Conair Filíochta" as it reminds me of 'The Connor Pass' which is beside where I grew up in Kerry. It is a narrow

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high pass across a mountain which connects Dingle to Brandon. It has the whiff of danger about it.

I like to think that poetry has to have a connection to the dangerous edge of things. Therefore the image of a mountain pass is very apt, I think.

The schoolgirl in this poem represents the future of the Irish language. Unbeknownst to herself, she is celebrating the heritage of Patrick Pearse as she speaks out loud in her native tongue as the train pulls out of Pearse Street Station. She is a heroine in my eyes.

Ar an traein go Cabrach

Bonsach bheag de chailín scoile
in éide de ghlas na gcaorach
tráthnóna caoch geimhridh
nach gcuirfeá do bhrocaire
dubh Rúiseach amach
i do sheasamh go diongbháilte
i lár an phasáiste chaoil
ar an traein ó Stáisiún na bPiarsach
go Cabrach gur cuma sa tsioc
leat a bhfuil timpeall ort
a bheith ann nó as is tú ag freagairt
do ghutháin phóca i nGaeilge
neamhghlan Ghaelscoile
in ard do chinn is do ghutha
beag beann ar shracfhéachaintí
doicheallacha agus ar dhreachanna
díchreidmheacha do chomhphaisinéirí
mo ghraidhin go deo thú
a chailín bhig na teanga binne
nach dtugann cúl le cine
ag spalpadh leat i dteanga do chroí
's tú mo Ghráinne Mhaol mo Róisín Dubh
mo Dhroimeann Donn Dílis
mo Réaltann na Spéirchoinneal gCaomh
ar do bhealach abhaile ón scoil



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ar an traein go Cabrach
ar thráthnóna caoch geimhreidh
nach gcuirfeá do bhrocaire
dubh Rúiseach amach

On the train to Cabra

A little slip of a schoolgirl
wearing a grey uniform
on a dark winter's evening
that you wouldn't put
your black Russian terrier out
standing firmly
in the middle of the narrow aisle
on the train from Pearse Street Station
to Cabra not giving a shit
whether those around you
are there are not as you answer
your mobile in the impure
Irish of the All-Irish School
at the top of your voice
not in the least bit put out by the hostile
glances and incredulous expressions
of your fellow travellers
fair play to you
my little girl of the sweet vowels
who's true to her race
spouting away in her heart-language
you are my Gráinne Mhaol my Róisín Dubh
my Dear Faithful Brown Cow
my Star of the Bright Skycandle
on your way home from school
on the train to Cabra
on a dark winter's evening
that you wouldn't put
your black Russian terrier out



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Ciara Ní É:

Anois don dán deireanach, siúl timpeall go slí isteach Choláiste na Tríonóide ar Shráid Thobar Phádraig, os comhair Sráid Dawson.

Now for our last poem, make your way to the Nassau St entrance of Trinity College, opposite Dawson Street.

STOP 5 Seosamh Ó Murchú - Trinity College entrance, Nassau St.

Ciara Ní É:

Seo muid ag an stad deireanach ar an gConair Filíochta. Seo chugaibh ‘Sráid Thobar Phádraig’ le Seosamh Ó Murchú. Mar a mhíneoidh Seosamh anois, tugann ainm Gaeilge na sráide seo tuiscint dúinn nach bhfaightear sa leagan Bearla.

We’ve reached our final stop on the Poetry Trail.

Our last poem is ‘Nassau Street’ by Seosamh Ó Murchú. ‘Sráid Thobar Phádraig’ is the Irish name of the poem, and the street, which directly translates as ‘St. Patrick’s Well Street’. This meaning is lost in the English, as Seosamh will now explain.

Seosamh Ó Murchú:

Réamhrá/Introduction

Tháinig ábhar an dáin seo chugam lá a rabhas ag siúl na sráide sin, Sráid Thobar Phádraig, i gcroílár gnóthach na cathrach agus go bhfaca bean, imirceach, ag iarraidh déirce ar thaobh na sráide. Bhí an saol mór ag brostú thar bráid gan mórán airde á tabhairt uirthi. Thugas faoi deara ansin cat ag bogadh laistigh den mhála codlata a bhí timpeall ar an mbean. Chuir sé a cheann amach agus stán ar an tranglam mór a bhí ag titim amach timpeall orthu. Chonacthas dom gur chiúnaigh an saol sa mheandar sin agus go raibh súile dorcha an chait sin ag priocadh ár gcoinsiasa. Chuimhníos ina dhiaidh sin go raibh an tobar óna dtagann ainm Gaeilge na sráide sin folaithe faoin tsráid díreach faoin áit a raibh an bhean agus a cat suite. Tá an tobar ann leis na cianta agus tá sé sa seanchas gur le huisce ón tobar a bhaist imirceach eile chun

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na háite, Naomh Pádraig, muintir Bhaile Átha Cliath. Chuimhníos leis ar an iomann cáiliúil, Lúireach Phádraig, i gcomhthéacs an nóiméid sin agus téama na cosanta istigh ina lár.

The idea for this poem came to me after witnessing an immigrant woman seeking alms on the footpath of Nassau Street in the heart of Dublin. As the lunchtime hordes passed by not taking much notice of her, a cat which had been hiding in her sleeping bag appeared and held the moment in what appeared to me to be an accusatory gaze. I thought then of St. Patrick's well from which the Irish name of the Street derives, the English name is a colonial imposition without any connection to the place. The well is still there, unknown to many, directly under the level of the street in the grounds of Trinity College. It was believed that Patrick, another immigrant, baptised the people of Dublin with water from this well. I also then recalled the famous refrain from the hymn sometimes called the Breastplate of Saint Patrick, with its theme of protection.

Sráid Thobar Phádraig

Caoile a colainne ina dronbhacart
le corr fhuar eibhir an chomhlacht' árachais.
Rinne cupán páipéir *Insomnia*
criathar na ciontacha a chrú ar ais
is ar éigean sa chos-slua a bhrostaigh
chun na toghla ar imeall shráid an áir.

Bhíog an chatcholainn laistigh de bhinn
an mhála codlata is bhain lán a súl dubh
as an saithe a bhí ag gabháil go tiubh
an cosán deargchaite siar is aniar.

An Pangur a chorraigh i mbaclainn na déirce
bhain an mustar mear den chaise ghriothail,
chiúnaigh an t-anfa, leáigh an doicheall,
ón lúireach tosta tháinig an impí aonair:



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cantar scéal
na mná seo
gan dídean
go gcloistear
gíosc a cnámh
is osna a croí
romhat is
i do dhiaidh
is go mbeire
a heagna ársa
faoi bhrat
an naoimh thú.

Nassau St

Her slender frame a set square against
the granite block of the insurance company.
The *Insomnia* paper cup outstretched
gathering guilty glances and leveraged looks
from the passing infantry, well on their way
towards the edge, the fall only feet away.

From inside her sleeping bag a cat moved
and those coal black eyes took it all in,
the swirling swarm of toing and froing
beside themselves along the wearied way.

This Pangur stretched, peered out from the
arms of compassion bled and under her gaze
the tempest abated, the clamour all becalmed,
the silent hymn brought forth the single plea:

hear her story
this woman
without home
hear clearly now
the crack of her bone
the sigh of her heart



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before you
behind you
and may her
ancient light
bring you safely
to the well
of the saint.

Ciara Ní É:

Agus b'shin é Conair Filíochta an ILF Dublin. Buíochas libh as teacht linn agus slán abhaile.

That's the end of the Poetry Trail, thanks for coming along and safe home.