

JOHN ENNIS NIALL McELWEE  
**Óisín's Journey Home**

A Keen at the Gates of the Heart  
Scenes from the Canadian Railway Logbook

**"You can not separate the rail journey  
from the development of this country  
or the people of it."**

**A Keen at the Gates of the Heart**

**Des Walsh says**

*"Óisín's Journey Home is a remarkable achievement in both history and artistic writing. It is an acknowledgment of the importance of the often neglected 'rail' poems, and the all too often neglected Newfoundland Railway, then and now."*

**Des Walsh, New Brunswick, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland**

**Scenes from the Canadian Railway Logbook**

**Thom Garfat says**

*"In the tradition of the epic poems, Niall McElwee pulls us back and forth in time, tracing the young men on the rails, railroads, exploring, encountering, discovering. And on the level of the poems, this speaks, says of Niall himself — back and forth, between Ireland and Canada."*

**Thom Garfat, PhD, Boston, Quebec**







**From:** "RODERICK KEEPING" <mandrkeeping@nl.rogers.com>  
**To:** "John Ennis" <jennis@wit.ie>  
**Date:** 30/05/2006 14:16  
**Subject:** Oisín's Journey Home

Hi! John:

Excellent work is my opinion. I made those extra comments in case you could use them. One of my family members suggested I should have said FORMER MAYOR & Citizen of railway town of Channel -Port-Aux- Basques,NI for what's it worth. ( smile) I told them i am modest.

Also the Lauchie section covers it well. He lived of the land as one would say, as a farmer, trapper and to feed his family and as well as being the human wind gauge for the railway.

One question though should it read 30 years?

Looking forward to the book at launching time. I am excited to be of any future help, thanks for having me thus far. Have a good day.

Rod.  
Rod

**From:** "RODERICK KEEPING" <mandrkeeping@nl.rogers.com>  
**To:** "John Ennis" <jennis@wit.ie>  
**Date:** 04/09/2006 23:29  
**Subject:** P.A.Basques visit.

Hi! John:

I trust you had a good trip back to your home?

Once again I wish to thank you for having me involved in your book launch etc.

I spoke to the mayor and many of the community folks after you departed and they are thrilled that you came to P.A.Basques. I am confident your visit is the beginning of future success in the Ireland and PAB connection. Something good will develop as a result. I am presently working on the meeting connection with the mayor for the meeting at Corner Brook as you suggested for end of sept. I will have mayor firm up same with Mr. Wade Bowers.

I will follow this e-mail with some photo's I took at Port Aux Basques and Cr. Brook for you files etc. You may want to use some of them for your news letters or annual report if you so desire.

Look forward to sharing with you again some time soon. Thanks once again.

Rod.

**Book proceeds going to three provincial railway sites**

By CORY HURLEY  
Star Staff Writer

**CORNER BROOK**

A new book celebrating the history of the Newfoundland Railway could pay dividends for railway restoration at three centres in the province.

Irish poet John Ennis will be launching his book, *Oisín's Journey Home*, in Port aux Basques at the train site on Monday at 2 p.m., at Corner Brook's train site on Tuesday at 1:30 p.m., and at the St. John's Railway and Coastal Museum on Wednesday at 3:30 p.m.

All proceeds from book sales in Newfoundland will go to the three locations.

"It's a small gesture, but at the same time I hope it will show an appreciation for the work of the people there," Ennis told *The Western Star* via telephone from Ireland on Thursday.

"There are very dedicated people working in these centres, so I will launch the book in these centres and the proceeds would go to whatever the people would consider appropriate there."

Ennis, chair of the centre for Newfoundland and Labrador studies at Waterford Institute of Technology, said the book rose as a bit of a challenge from a colleague, Niall McElwee, who was writing on the coast-to-coast and mainland Canadian rail experiences. A poem of McElwee's work is included in Ennis' book.

"It's an heroic poem that celebrates the heroism of the people who laid the Newfoundland railway," he said. "They had very little by way of technology at the time, it was really pick and shovel. They literally levelled hills and filled valleys and it was done in a very quick time, a short number of years."

"It evoked a lot of support, as well as its criticism at the time, but it did have the effect of opening up western Newfoundland in a way it wasn't before."


Reid, Henderson, Connors were names mentioned by the author as a few of those section men and those who kept the narrow gauge open in the winter snows of the Guff Topsails.

"The railway book contains stunning specially-commissioned artwork from award-winning young Newfoundland artist Michael Pittman and students of the Athlone Institute of Technology in Ireland," Ennis said.

The Irish poet has already compiled with Sir Wilfred Grenfell College colleague Stephanie McKenzie on *The Backyards of Heaven* (2003) and *However Blow the Winds* (2004) with McKenzie and fellow Grenfell College professor Randall Maggs, anthologies of poetry and song from Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador. The trio are working on *The Echoing Years*, a coast-to-coast anthology of Canadian alongside Irish and European poetry.

Ennis was also an honorary guest at the 2006 March Hare Festival here and launched his book, *Goldcrest Falling*, in Corner Brook.

*Oisín's Journey Home* has a commemorative foreword by former Port aux Basques mayor Rod Keeping.



JOHN ENNIS

August 25, 2006

