

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **AN TOLLAMH SÉAN Ó COILEÁIN**, in University College Cork on 2 June, 2006, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **PÁDRAIG TYERS**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

I bparóiste Thuar an Fhíona i gceantar Shliabh gCua i nDéisibh Mumhan a d'fhás Pádraig Tyers suas. Ceantar ab ea é go raibh iarsmaí na Gaeilge go láidir fós ann. As a óige bhí scéalta á chlos aige ar an mbean sí, ar an mbadhb, ar *Petticoat Loose*, ar an leipreachán ar an bpúca agus ar phearsana iontacha eile an bhéaloidis. I measc na múinteoirí Gaeilge a bhí aige bhí an file cáiliúil Pádraig Ó Míléadha, cé ná raibh fhios ag na daltaí aige san am san cáil na filíochta a bheith air. Níorbh ionadh don mbuachaill óg dúil a chur sa teanga agus gach ar bhain léi, i gan fhios do féin, geall leis. Is ag méadú ar an dúil sin a bhí i rith a shaoil riamh 'na dhia' san, agus níor stad nó gur bhain sé amach Corca Dhuibhne thiar; b'ín í an cheanncheathrú feasta aige, cé gur i gCorcaigh, i lár slí, a chaitheadh sé formhór mór a shaoil.

I gCnoc Mellerí a fuair sé a chuid meánscolaíochta, áit go dtabharfadh sé cheithre bliana ag múineadh ann ar ball agus go mbeadh leanúntas aige air i gcónaí. I ndeireadh a théarma mar mhac léinn ann, ghnóthaigh sé scoláireacht go dtí Coláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh agus thosnaigh ar a chúrsa léinn ann fómhar na bliana 1943. Níor lú a shuim sa cluichí ná sa léann agus, murab ionann agus an gobadán, tháinig an dá thráigh go feillebhinn leis. Gaeilge agus Laidean, agus an Ghréigis mar anlann leo, a bhí aige chun na céime B.A.

The academic year 1946-7 proved to be an *annus mirabilis*, for while studying for the MA degree in Irish, he was on the winning Sigerson and Fitzgibbon teams, defeating UCG in the final of the hurling competition by a score of 6-5 to nil; not only did Galway fail to score, but failed to register even a wide during the entire course of the match. For Pádraig it was a bitter victory: he had learned of his father's death earlier that day. But life would renew itself: in late February he had met a BComm student, Betty Irwin, while training in the old Quarry. She was a member of the winning Ashbourne Cup team that same year, and was destined to become his wife.

Pádraig would gain further honours at county level, winning the football championship with Lees in 1955 and being chosen as goalkeeper on the Cork team from 1953 to 1956. His inter-county career would end in the disappointment of being defeated by Galway, led by the 'terrible twins', Purcell and Stockwell, in the 1956 all-Ireland final.

On graduating from UCC, Pádraig spent nine years teaching and a further eight years with Gael Linn, being involved with Louis Marcus in producing films on the skills of Gaelic football and hurling, the latter demonstrated by Christy Ring, with whom he formed a close friendship. He returned to UCC as a member of staff in 1964, where he would continue in the dual role of director of audio-visual services and Stiúrthóir na Gaeilge Labhartha until his retirement in 1988.

Bhí aithne curtha aige ar thithe agus ar mhná tí na Gaeltachta le linn a thréimhse le Gael Linn; daingníodh agus buanaíodh an caidreamh san anois. A bhuíochas ar Phádraig gur thug glúin scoláirí a n-aghaidh siar ar Chorca Dhuibhne, cuid mhór díobh ná beadh an áit feicthe go deo acu mara mbeadh é bheith ina fhear cinn bóthair acu. Bhí gean agus buíochas thoir agus thiar air dá bharr. Ba nós leis féin mí a thabhairt thiar gach samhradh ag cur oiliúna ar mhúinteoirí agus ar abhair múinteoirí.

His work in Corca Dhuibhne attracted the attention of Dr. Tim Mahony of Toyota Ireland, himself a language enthusiast, resulting in a substantial bequest to the College, the largest it had received up to that time, intended primarily for the development of Modern Irish at UCC.

Pádraig would always have seen himself above all else as a teacher of Irish – and indeed the courses he developed still provide the basis of instruction in the language laboratory here – but he has also produced a substantial body of published work, covering various aspects of Gaeltacht life, literature, folkloristics, biography and autobiography. He has authored or edited seven monographs to date: *Ar Seachrán* (translated as *The Wild Rover*), *Leoithne Aniar* (translated as *Blasket Memories*), *An tAthair Tadhg*, *Abair Leat: Joe Daly*, *Malairt Beatha*, *Ceamara Chorca Dhuibhne*, *Sliabh gCua m'Óige*.

Today we acknowledge his contribution to the Irish language and to Irish life and culture.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.